











*David Hutcheson.*

THOMAS CARLYLE  
AND  
JOHN STUART MILL.



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AND

JOHN STUART MILL.

BY ✓

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GEORGE ALLEN,

SUNNYSIDE, ORPINGTON, KENT.

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TO MY FRIENDS

THE RESIDENTS AT TOYNBEE HALL, WHITECHAPEL,  
WHO HAVE GRACIOUSLY ALLOWED ME TO SHARE IN THEIR GOOD WORK,  
THIS ATTEMPT TO ESTIMATE THE IMPORTANCE  
OF TWO GREAT SOCIAL TEACHERS  
IS (WITHOUT PERMISSION)  
AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED.

*"The amelioration of outward circumstances will be the effect, but can never be the means, of mental and moral improvement."*—PESTALOZZI.

## P R E F A C E.

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IT is necessary to say a few words on the circumstances in which this essay was written.

In the year 1848, the friends and admirers of the Rev. Charles Webb Le Bas, most of them members of the Civil Service of India, and formerly students at Haileybury College, founded an annual prize in the University of Cambridge for an essay upon some subject of general literature, to be awarded in memory of Mr. Le Bas.

The regulations adopted by the senate confine the competition for the prize to graduates of the university of not more than three years' standing from their first degree, and require the successful essay to be published.

The prize was this year awarded to my essay upon the subject "Thomas Carlyle and John Stuart Mill"; and in compliance with the regulations I now commit it to the press. I have no

reason to suppose that it will escape the fate of most other prize essays, unless perchance the superior humanity of the subject may attract a notice which its treatment will hardly justify.

As frequent quotations from the works of Carlyle and Mill naturally occur in these pages, it may be well to state here, once for all, the editions to which reference is made. The case of Carlyle presents little difficulty. I have used the uniform "People's Edition," published in thirty-one volumes by Messrs. Chapman and Hall, under the author's direct supervision. The references in the notes are made, not to the volumes in the series, but to those of the work in question; but where, as in the case of the *Miscellanies*, several works are contained in one volume, the reference to the pages follows the volume, so that the number quoted is always that actually appearing above the passage referred to. This course has, after considerable experience, proved to me the simplest in practice. The two volumes of *Reminiscences*, posthumously published, are referred to by the edition of Professor Norton, brought out by Messrs. Macmillan last year; and Mr. Froude's Biography is, in both parts, the first edition, published by Messrs. Longmans. To distinguish briefly between the two parts of this Biography, I have referred to them as "First Forty" and "Second Forty" respectively.



Unhappily there is no uniform edition of Mill's works. It becomes necessary therefore to specify in detail the editions referred to in the footnotes. They are as follows :—

<i>Principles of Political Economy.</i>	}	(Longmans)	2 vols, 8th ed.	1878
<i>Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy.</i>				
<i>Dissertations and Discussions.</i>	}	"	5th ed.	1878
<i>Representative Government.</i>			3 vols, 2nd ed.	1867
<i>Autobiography.</i>	}	(Parker)	4th vol.	1875
<i>System of Logic.</i>			1st ed.	1861
<i>The Subjection of Women.</i>	}	(Longmans)	8th ed.	1886
<i>Utilitarianism.</i>			People's ed.	1884
<i>Comte and Positivism.</i>	}	"	5th ed.	1883
<i>Irish Land Question.</i>			9th ed.	1885
<i>On Liberty.</i>	}	(Trübner)	2nd ed.	1865
<i>Inaugural Address.</i>			2nd ed.	1870
<i>Thoughts on Parliamentary Reform.</i>	}	(Longmans)	People's ed.	1884
			"	1884
	}	"	2nd ed.	1859

In extenuation of the paucity of references to other writers, I may perhaps be allowed to mention that the essay was written in Germany, beyond the reach of English libraries.

E. J.



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## CHAPTER I.

### INTRODUCTORY.

WHEN an estimate is to be formed of the merits and relative importance of two characters, the critic may choose between two methods of procedure. He may make resemblances, or, on the other hand, differences, the leading idea of his criticism. The decision depends in each case upon the nature of the subject.

All great men are alike in the fundamental attributes of character. Greatness, by every admission, involves earnestness, purity, fidelity, love of truth. In these essentials Carlyle and Mill were alike, and it would be quite possible to begin a criticism with this idea of resemblance as a guide.

But the point is not merely to seize an idea, but to seize the most fruitful idea. There may be many ways of climbing a mountain, but one is usually the best; and it will need but a short consideration to see that in the present case the best path is that which starts from the idea of difference.

For if in their characters Carlyle and Mill betray that elementary resemblance which marks all great

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men, in their work, still more in their mental attitudes, they are wide as the poles asunder.

It may be said, without much fear of contradiction, that the world's thinkers fall under two great leading classes—men of letters and men of science. The former are occupied with the spiritual interests of mankind, its loves, hopes, fears, reverences, and hatreds ; they deal only with circumstances as they embody or affect spiritual movements, and with the material only as it appears in the light of the invisible. Within these limits they may differ widely in degree, from the Dante, who follows man in his path to heaven or to hell, to the De Musset, who sings of the loves of the boudoir.

The man of science, on the other hand, deals only with forms. He is concerned with discovering, observing, classifying, and reasoning from phenomena, mental and physical. He sometimes claims to intrude into a province which the man of letters has treated as his own, but it is on the very ground that it really belongs to his kingdom as it has just been defined,—that it is a region, to use a technical phrase, not of *ὄντα*, but of *φαινόμενα*. And it does occasionally happen that a man of unusual grasp combines both hemispheres in his range of vision, but even then it is not difficult to decide, in any of his utterances, upon which his eye is resting.

It is hardly necessary to do more than assert that Carlyle belongs pre-eminently to the former of these two classes : Mill, as clearly, to the latter ; and thus

to establish a strong presumption in favour of the differential method.

But there is another equally important consideration. Carlyle and Mill differed not only in the subjects with which they were occupied, but, as decidedly, in the attitudes which they adopted towards them.

Carlyle, first and last, stood alone. The message which he brought had grown up from the depths of his own soul in the solitude of a Scottish wilderness. He followed no earthly banner, and fought in no recognised army. Even when the eyes of all that was most hopeful in England were turned towards him as to a leader and a guide, he formed no school or sect. Nor did he ever formulate a system. Systems were his abhorrence. Springing, autochthonous, from the rugged soil, he dwelt apart from the ways of the world, crying, Repent, Repent, and enforcing his message with burning arrows of rebuke and entreaty. Then he passed away, and left his words to stand or fall according to their own inherent worth.

Mill was the chosen hope of a band of philosophers, who looked to him to give their work form and consistency. Carefully bred up in the lore of the Benthamite school, he imbibed with his earliest breath the thoughts and temper of stronger minds, and then, perhaps unconscious of his position, invested them with harmonious and enduring form. His own personality was too strong to allow him to be a mere compiler, but it was not strong enough to

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enable him completely to throw off influences so powerful as those which shaped his youth. And so it happened in his case, as so frequently before and since, that the messenger delivered his message, but couched in his own language, coloured by his own views. He was one of a band whose members revered him indeed as the most completely equipped and skilful soldier of the troop, but he was only *primus inter pares*. He neither started nor ended a movement. When he died his successor was ready, and the list of the Fathers is not closed yet.

Is there a simple formula which shall express these two distinctions clearly, and so serve as a guide for our investigation? I think such may be found.

When in the days of Israel's glory there appeared one professing a Divine message to the souls of men, he was termed a *prophet*. No formal guarantee of his mission was required, he might spring from any rank in life, or from any country. If events justified his words, he was a true prophet, and as such was honoured; if no confirmation of his sayings appeared, he was accounted false, and spurned. But in either case he was a prophet, by the nature of the task which he undertook. Carlyle was a *prophet*.

In course of time these prophecies became systematized and expounded. There came schools and teachers in the place of solitary figures. Shammai and Hillel took the places of Isaiah and Habakkuk, and drew learners, called, in the Hellenized language



of the day, "disciples," around them. But it was the learner's duty to do more than learn. When he had himself imbibed the teaching of his master, he was sent out to make proselytes. Thus the disciple in one aspect became the apostle in another. Then came a teacher whose influence was so great as to stamp with permanency all the institutions connected with his name. His apostles became central figures in the world's history, and so it comes to pass that no better name than that of *apostle* can be found for one who goes abroad to convert the world to the teaching of his master. Such was Mill.

*Carlyle was a prophet, Mill an apostle.* This formula will serve well enough to indicate the lines upon which we proceed. But, to pin the terms a little more closely to the paper, a qualification may in each case be added. The term *prophet* has so long been associated principally with such teaching as Carlyle's, that in his case we need not do more than employ an attribute suggestive of date. In the case of Mill, as apostleship is of all kinds, and the nature of its message consequently somewhat dependent on circumstances, we shall require to use a term which will suggest the nature of Mill's doctrine. Our first concern will be, therefore, with *The Prophet of the Latter Days*; our next, with *The Apostle of Benthamism*.

But it will not be sufficient to give isolated estimates of the respective merits of the two men. We must treat them as forces bearing on the same body, or the significance of the conjunction will be lost.

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So it will be necessary, after endeavouring to ascertain the nature of these two particular forces, to attempt some estimate of their influence. It requires little imagination to picture the condition of any given period of history as the result of an immense number of forces working upon certain materials. And what is more, it seems in accord with the general views of the greatest critics to consider this attitude as at least profitable and suggestive, if not absolutely the truth. For without touching upon long-vexed questions of necessity and free will, we may, I think, admit that the lives of men, and pre-eminently of great men, have a palpable effect upon external conditions. This was certainly the view both of Carlyle and Mill. To trace these effects is no easy task, and yet that would be poor criticism which gave up the duty without a trial. So we must endeavour to gauge the relative influences of Carlyle and Mill upon the world in which they lived.

If we wish to cover this idea with a serviceable formula, we shall hardly do better than by borrowing a metaphor from that striking picture drawn by St. Paul of the clay in the hands of the potter. Perhaps the thought of the power there suggested is too absolute to be strictly followed, but, as a metaphor, *The Potter's Clay* may serve as the idea of a third aspect from which to consider our subject.

Thus far we shall have considered Carlyle and Mill in what appear to be their essential positions as teachers. It has been said that every man is the embodiment of an idea, and that the only way to

understand him is to find that idea. But in addition to this key notion, the life of an active man furnishes generally other materials for consideration,—works, so to speak, off the main line of thought, but important enough to be worth some study. These we may call *Parerga*, and under this head consider those achievements which, in the central study of our subject, were for the sake of clearness omitted.

Finally, to make some attempt at completeness, it will not be amiss to glance carefully over the ground again, and see if we cannot gather up such minor fragments as were unavoidably left over at the first reaping. Lesser qualities of character and style, small details of circumstance, though not in themselves sufficient to warrant incorporation into the main idea, yet help, as *Gleanings*, to swell the final harvest. Thus we have the rough sketch of an essay on Carlyle and Mill.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE PROPHET OF THE LATTER DAYS.

THE nineteenth century was born amid the roar of battle. Napoleon, barely resting after the first marvellous display which proved to an astonished Europe that a new Titan had arisen, was preparing that mighty march over the wrecks of kingdoms, which led at last to the rock of St. Helena.

But Napoleon himself was only the shadow of a mightier force which, more secret in its workings, but still more fatal, had prepared the way before him. Like a destroying angel Voltaire had passed over the land; and creeds, institutions, and reputations, already hollow and ready to die, had withered at his touch. So universal was the wreck that all seemed lost, and the world of thought and belief almost a blank sheet. It scarcely needed the Diderots and the D'Alemberts to clear away the fragments. What Voltaire had done for the rest of Europe, that Hume had done for England, and though appearances were steadier there, it needs but little study of the period to see that England too,

in the first years of the century, was hanging over the abyss.

But man will not be content long with mere denial. Of all the attempts at construction which have from time to time been conceived, perhaps that of Rousseau is the wildest. Yet it was an attempt at something positive. Man had "rights," and it was his business to assert them. Following upon the doctrines of Rousseau came the reactionism of Chateaubriand and the attractive but unpractical attempts of the St. Simonians, and then the ambitious essay of Comte to found a new doctrine of ethics upon the results of scientific knowledge. On the whole, however, the prospects from France were not hopeful. She had destroyed the old temples, but she could not build anew.

More promising was the outlook in Germany. There a brilliant outburst of genius, heralded by Lessing, had succeeded to the unhappy productions of the *Sturm-und-Drang Zeit*, or, in Carlyle's own homely phrase, the "bowl-and-dagger department."<sup>1</sup> Goethe, Schiller, Richter, Novalis, were digging deep below the conventions of denial and assertion which a shallower age had been content to accept as truths, and were finding that a noble life was still to be lived, that reverence and faith, under new forms indeed, were still possible. The world was invited to believe that a man who saw in all its depth and breadth the despair which was brooding like a nightmare over the mind of Europe, could yet

<sup>1</sup> *State of German Literature*, p. 132.

calmly face the problem and assert that deliverance was possible; that he who could produce *Werter* and *Faust* was yet capable of *Wilhelm Meister*. Kant and Fichte, too, on the scientific side, had boldly rejected the scepticism<sup>2</sup> of Voltaire and Hume, and accepted intuition as a surer guide than logic towards the solution of the great problems of existence.

In England also there were strivings after better things. The vehement orthodoxy of Johnson, and the sentimental piety of Cowper, were no longer possible for the generation which had studied Hume and the Philosophes. Much had to be cleared away before the ground would be ready for the builder. But in the passionate discontent of Byron and Shelley a kindly criticism will see the hope of a brighter day. At least it was something that they refused to be content with obvious untruth. Death, we know, cut short the promise shadowed forth by their splendid powers, and left the work to other hands. Coleridge too, after a brief burst of splendour, sank into a chaos relieved only by stray flashes of genius. But Wordsworth's light was burning brightly in his mountain home: he at least had found peace, and shown the world by example that a life of piety, simple and poor as it was, could still be worthy of a man. Wordsworth's value is one of

<sup>2</sup> It is scarcely necessary to say that I do not use the word "scepticism" in a theological sense. I am well aware that the Protestant stories of Voltaire's atheism have been adopted from the Jesuits: *Deo erexit Voltaire*. Yet I look upon his work on the whole as destructive.



the most difficult of all estimates in English literature. At first neglected, then almost worshipped, then allowed to sink again into oblivion, he is perhaps only now finding his true place. But it is surely not too much to say that Wordsworth may be reckoned as one of the most hopeful factors in the spiritual condition of the first quarter of the century.

One other influence must be noticed, before we come to that which was undoubtedly the most striking feature of the time. That the Oxford movement, with all its extravagance and false sentiment, had a deep meaning, few thoughtful men will deny. The national church had long slumbered in contented lethargy, but the action of the Reform Parliament upon the subject of the Irish temporalities served as a warning which did not fall unheeded. Earnestness is the best feature of the teaching which Newman, and Pusey, and Keble strove to enforce. Religion was to be no longer a thing of social convenience and state policy, of magistracies and benefices, but a genuine spiritual power. Unfortunately, this earnestness looked for inspiration to the past rather than the present. St. Francis and Savonarola were its models, and St. Francis and Savonarola, exquisite characters as they are, were no guides for the days of 1830. So, after a brilliant opening, the movement waned. Its greatest champion found for his soul a haven which for the majority of men can only be termed, as it has in fact often been termed, impossible. The feeling passed from religion to art, and we find it again,

with its best feature still prominent, in the pre-Raphaelite school of Rossetti and his followers, and, rash as it may sound to say so, probably in the tones of such poems as *Dolores* and *The Garden of Proserpine*, with which Mr. Swinburne has astonished and fascinated the world. A stone is thrown into the lake, and it is hard to tell where the ripples end, yet one cannot help looking upon the Oxford movement as a dying force, too alien to English genius to be of the first importance here. Its influence is still great in details,—you can hardly enter a village church without being reminded of it,—but it is an influence which seems to work principally on those who are out of the main current of thought.

I have little hesitation in assuming that the real teacher of the century's youth was, not Newman, but Bentham. A strange, patriarchal figure is this which rises before us as we turn our eyes back upon the years. A cynical enthusiast, better than his creed, yet consistent to the last in the practice of his philosophy, careless of his own fame, generous, even prodigal of his labour, a powerfully acute thinker on great subjects, yet almost childishly credulous on minor points, his ghost still haunts the memory of Queen's Square days with pathetic persistence. Many of those who are consistent Benthamites know nothing of his writings; some, perhaps, never heard his name. It is through his interpreters that he is known. And yet his teaching was marvellously simple. The only real things in life, says Bentham, are the sensations known as pleasures and pains.



No one doubts what is a pleasure and what is a pain, though the varieties of each differ infinitely. The duty of the good man is to seek to minimise the quantity of pain in the world, and to increase to its full possibility the quantity of pleasure. Thus the end of ethics is the Greatest Happiness of the Greatest Number, for happiness means the presence of pleasure and the absence of pain. Devotion to a more exalted ideal is mere asceticism, intuition is only another name for prejudice. The duty of philosophers is, by a study of phenomena, the causes of pleasures and pains, to decide by what arrangements the desired end may be obtained. The duty of the unlearned is to observe the rules thus discovered by the wise. It is true that man does always what pleases him, *i.e.*, his acts are the result of his volitions, but by education he may be taught what course of conduct will, by increasing the pleasures of others, really in the end give him most happiness.

Such, popularly described, is the famous doctrine of Hedonism, which, with various modifications, has played so great a part in the development of the century. Its success was prompt and wide-reaching. On a first reading, the earlier chapters of the famous *Traité de Législation* seem irresistible; it is only after careful thought that the mind sees possible alternatives.

Seldom has a single seed of thought yielded such a prolific harvest. To it can be traced the growth of that great scientific movement which is the striking

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feature of the century. The movement has many branches, but leaves and fruit alike betray a common origin. Phenomena, forms, are the subjects of all the scientific schools; their teaching is improvements in these.

First and foremost come the many divisions of the physical school, boasting the names of Brewster, Faraday, Herschel, Darwin, and, later, of Tyndall and Huxley, whose teaching, at first purely logical, has long assumed, as it was bound to do, an ethical cast. But on the mental side the activity was no less keen. In politics, Mackintosh, Grote, Jeffrey, Sir George Lewis, Brougham, and Macaulay developed a science of the forms of government which succeeded to the popular harangues of O'Connell and Sir Francis Burdett. The phenomena of mind were studied by Brown, James Mill, Bain, and Martineau, and a new impetus given to the science of psychology, suggested long ago by Hartley. The economists, McCulloch, Ricardo, and Nassau Senior, laboured upon the phenomena of wealth, and built on the foundation of Adam Smith a philosophy which was destined to strange fortunes. Finally, in the province of law, really the *nidus* of all this activity, but strangely overlooked amid the general fervour, Austin, neglected, and impeded by ill-health, was slowly working at that hard-grained task, which will long remain as a monument of his undaunted perseverance.

Side by side with these, infected with their spirit, but not working with their single eye, was a band

of men whose real duty lay elsewhere, but who unhappily conceived themselves bound to allay a conflict which in truth never existed, but which the world seemed determined to imagine, the so-called conflict between religion and science. Among all the solutions of the problem which were suggested by the Maurices, Kingsleys, Colensos, and Stanleys, the obvious explanation seems never to have presented itself. And so we have the unhappy spectacle of a number of gifted and noble natures striving to reconcile irreconcilables, spending their lives in fighting for the forms instead of teaching the spirit of their beliefs. A little clearer insight into the nature of religion and science would have saved them a world of pain. Had a single philosopher of note announced that truth, honesty, simplicity, reverence, purity, were obsolete virtues, then indeed the champions of religion might have sounded the war-note. But no such gospel, in word at least, was preached, and they who should have been on the watch to detect and ward off the real dangers which lay under this intense devotion to science, were themselves occupied in pseudo-scientific investigations, which were to lead to conclusions to which they had already made up their minds.

In addition to these intellectual influences, the extraordinary increase of material wealth which followed upon the inventions of Watt, Hargreaves, Arkwright, and the Stephensons gave a character of its own to the time. Wealth was passing from the hands of the landowners to those of the manu-

facturers, and the excitement aroused by the agitation for the Reform Bill had exalted the influence of the House of Commons to its highest pitch, at the same time that Reform itself had lodged the power of the House in the hands of the middle classes. The new rulers of the nation were men whose claims to distinction often lay principally in the amount of their wealth, sometimes too unscrupulously won by methods not the most creditable. The change in the conditions of labour, brought about by the introduction of machinery, had disorganized the working-classes, and left them at the mercy of their employers. The old craft-guilds, with their rules to secure fair treatment of the labourer and good quality for his work, had fallen into decay, and no substitute had as yet been found. The state of affairs amongst the artizan-classes may be gathered from such books as Bamford's *Life of a Radical*—a picture of the most hopeful material going to ruin for want of guidance.

The violent agitations in the labour-market, produced by the sudden cessation of a long war and an unusual uncertainty of harvests, spread misery and discontent. The workmen saw their masters amassing huge fortunes and spending them in luxury, while their own condition was infinitely less desirable than it had been in the old days of cottage industry and long apprenticeships. And they were fed with political doctrines, which they applied, doubtless, in a sense other than that understood by their

teachers, and stored up as formidable weapons for the struggle which many amongst them believed to be imminent. A pessimist observer, calmly surveying the national aspect in the year of grace 1830, might have summed up the situation thus: an idle aristocracy; a plutocracy callously absorbed in the pursuit of wealth; a proletariat smouldering in discontent.

Meanwhile, like a lonely watchman of the night, sat a strange figure looking down from a Scottish wilderness upon all this world. What thoughts arose in the mind of Carlyle as he paced in solitude those rugged hills, we can only guess from the glimpses which he himself has given us. Here is a passage which must have been then trembling on his pen, and which seems to describe his attitude towards the world. It is put into the mouth of his creation, Professor Teufelsdröckh:—

*“Ach, mein Lieber! . . . it is a true sublimity to dwell here. These fringes of lamplight, struggling up through smoke and fiery exhalation, some fathoms into the ancient reign of Night—what thinks Boötes of them, as he leads his Hunting-Dogs over the zenith in their leash of sidereal fire? That stifled hum of Midnight, when Traffic has lain down to rest, and the chariot-wheels of Vanity, still rolling here and there through distant streets, are bearing her to Halls roofed-in, and lighted to the due pitch for her; and only Vice and Misery, to prowl and moan like night-birds, are abroad: that hum, I say, like the stertorous, unquiet slumber of sick Life, is heard in Heaven! Oh, under that hideous coverlet of vapours, and putrefactions, and unimaginable gases, what a Fermenting-vat lies simmering and hid! The joyful and the sorrowful are there; men are dying there, men are being born; men are praying,—on the other side of a brick partition, men are cursing; and around them all is the vast, void Night. The proud Grandee still lingers in his perfumed saloons, or reposes within*



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damask curtains ; Wretchedness cowers into truckle-beds, or shivers hunger-stricken in its lair of straw ; in obscure cellars, *Rouge et Noir* languidly emits its voice-of-destiny to haggard, hungry vi lains ; while Councillors of State sit plotting, and playing their high chess-game, whereof the pawns are men. The Lover whispers his mistress that the coach is ready ; and she, full of hope and fear, glides down to fly with him over the borders : the Thief, still more silently, sets to his picklocks and crowbars, or lurks in wait till the watchmen first snore in their boxes. Gay mansions, with supper-rooms and dancing-rooms, are full of light and music and high-swelling hearts ; but in the Condemned Cells, the pulse of life beats tremulous and faint, and bloodshot eyes look out through the darkness, which is around and within, for the light of a stern last morning. Six men are to be hanged on the morrow ; comes no hammering from the *Rabenstein* ?—their gallows must even now be o'building. Upwards of five hundred thousand two-legged animals without feathers lie around us, in horizontal positions ; their heads all in nightcaps, and full of the foolishlest dreams. Riot cries aloud, and staggers and swaggers in his rank dens of shame ; and the Mother, with streaming hair, kneels over her pallid dying infant, whose cracked lips only her tears moisten.—All these heaped and huddled together, with nothing but a little carpentry and masonry between them ;—crammed in, like salted fish in their barrel ;—or weltering, shall I say, like an Egyptian pitcher of tamed vipers, each struggling to get its *head above* the others : such work goes on under that cloud counterpane !—But I, *mein Werther*, sit above it all ; I am alone with the Stars.”<sup>3</sup>

This is a picture by a master's hand. Design and execution are alike great. There is immense power of imagination, a wide knowledge of life, deep sympathy, richness and yet harmony of detail, splendour of light, and gloom of shade. It is worth while to look somewhat closer at the artist.

Thomas Carlyle was born in the year 1795, in the little border township of Ecclefechan in Dumfriesshire. Life had revealed itself to him from the first

<sup>3</sup> *Sartor Resartus*, p. 14.

as a battle ; not, indeed, a hopeless struggle, but a condition which allowed no scope for idleness. His parents were of a too rare type of peasant race,—an earnest, God-fearing, thrifty, energetic pair. The father whom Carlyle has so lovingly sketched in his “Reminiscences,” was, even after all allowance for filial affection, no ordinary man. Stern perhaps to the outward eye, but for the rest all that a man with his chances could well be. “He was very kind, and I loved him,”<sup>4</sup> is the touching confession which the son makes at the brink of the father’s grave. We shall see something of the meaning of this word *kind*, so lightly used, yet in its origin so full of meaning, as we trace Carlyle’s history.

But if his love was for his father, Carlyle’s affection played round his mother. His grief at her death was too deep for formal expression ; but enough records remain to preserve to us a story of almost idyllic tenderness. To her the first news of every success was sent ; with her Carlyle unbosomed himself of his troubles. His first earnings were devoted to her comfort ; on her he leant in his hours of deepest despair. His fear to wound her feelings often made him speak in parables to her ; but love is marvellously quick to see through an allegory.

Well did his parents deserve the respect and love he bore them. His father was poor, and some sage of authority had tempted him with the

<sup>4</sup> *Reminiscences*, vol. i., p. 45.

cowardly suggestion that a boy, if educated, would grow up to despise his family.<sup>5</sup> This was a bitter thought for a stern man, conscious of his own worth, and he could not but know that it had a meaning. Yet with a "noble faith"<sup>6</sup> he put it aside, and did what he believed to be right, leaving the consequences. So Carlyle was sent to Annan school, and, when the time came, to Edinburgh University, that he might occupy the highest position within his parents' range of vision, the post of a minister of the Scottish Kirk.

At Edinburgh Carlyle was taught mathematics, and learnt, without teaching, much that his preceptors guessed little of, from books and men. How he managed in a few years, as a poor student or pedagogue, to amass that vast store of mental wealth which shines so conspicuously even through his earliest writings, can be guessed only by those to whom the ways of genius are familiar. The critics of Ampère's day wondered whence the bourgeois author drew his descriptions of high life. The element of *imagination* does not seem to have entered into their calculations.

Before long it became clear that Carlyle would not occupy the position for which his parents had destined him, or indeed any other conventional niche. There was a fatal feature in his character, which shut him out from the broad path. He was troubled with a conscience.

<sup>5</sup> *Reminiscences*, vol. i., p. 19.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*



Perhaps this is the keynote to the whole of Carlyle's history ; it may be well, therefore, to sound it clearly. Society is composed, for the most part, of men who assent with their lips to one set of propositions, and by their lives assert an inconsistent creed. Most men will admit that it is wrong to tell a lie ; but it is agreed that lies of a certain kind are admissible in practice. Few men will openly allege that money-making is the true end of existence, but very many will devote their whole lives to the making of money. And so it comes about that the man of the world has a double system of ethics—one side for Sunday wear, the other for weekdays. Compromise is the virtue which the world delights to honour.

Carlyle was so constituted that such a position was an impossibility for him. It was hardly a question of rejecting a falsehood—he could not have lived a day with it. A sentence from his journal puts the matter in a nutshell. . “ ‘All true, Mr. Carlyle, BUT’ : I say, ‘All true, Mr. Carlyle, AND.’ ”<sup>7</sup> The first part of the quotation is the suggestion of the man of the world ; the latter, Carlyle's answer—“Get thee behind me, Satan.” This attitude he resolutely maintained during his whole life,—at what cost, let each man judge for himself who has tried the like.

At the very outset it cut him off from the Scottish Church. It was impossible for him to believe literally in the Westminster Confession, and he could not join a calling which demanded such a

<sup>7</sup> *First Forty*, vol. ii., p. 206.

belief. So he turned, with no great eagerness, to schoolmastering.

But here, too, there were difficulties. The powers of Kirkcaldy town hardly recognized the true position of affairs. From their point of view, Carlyle was their servant, bound to execute their orders. Carlyle did not adopt this view, and threw up the affair in disgust. Judged by his own lofty standard, he stands condemned for this. He was not required to make any false profession, by word or act. His conscientious labours could hardly have failed to do good, and the work lay to his hand. Had the "Infinite Nature of Duty" been as clear to him then as it afterwards became, he would not have deserted his post. But he was conscious of great powers, and the thought of wasting them in a country town proved too much for him.

He was now possessed of that perfect independence which consists in having no particular place in the world. His history for the next few years is not a cheerful, if a somewhat common story. Attempts at this and that, aimless wanderings to and fro, stormy spiritual conflict,—the experience is perhaps necessary, but it is unpleasant whilst it lasts.

The conduct of his parents during these years was such as to bind Carlyle's heart to them for ever. It was no common disappointment that their son had turned away from what seemed to them the highest and most sacred of callings. They could hardly conceal that they looked upon the flight from Kirk-

caldy as a mistake. To the resolute, ever-busy farmer, the sight of a man in the prime of life, loitering about in idleness, or with only the pretence of reading, must have been terribly exasperating. And James Carlyle was no meek saint.

Yet there was not a word of reproach, no slightest reference to the toil spent in providing means which seemed now destined to be thrown away, no urgings towards a "career of fame and wealth," such as some fathers are not ashamed to hold out before their sons. Though they could have no sympathy with his doubts, Carlyle's parents saw that they could not judge of his difficulties, and with supreme wisdom they left him to fight his own battle, merely assuring him, by expressive acts of kindness, of their earnest wishes for his welfare. It is no exaggeration to say that, had they acted otherwise, their son might have ended his days in a madhouse.

At last, after a dreary night, the morning began to dawn. In the course of his omnivorous reading, Carlyle had been attracted by the promising subject of German Literature. With indomitable energy he had taught himself German, helped only by grammar and dictionary. Learning won this way, by the sweat of the brow, is not lightly forgotten, and Carlyle to the end of his days was a master of the German tongue. His venture proved successful; he was one, as he himself tells us,<sup>8</sup> whom Goethe had helped to lead out of spiritual obstruction, "into peace and light." Moreover, the study brought him

<sup>8</sup> *Goethe*, "Miscellanies," vol. i., p. 213.

a mission. He had before done craft-work for Sir David Brewster on the *Encyclopædia*, and had translated Legendre. Now he was to begin a labour of love, the introduction of German literature to the world of English thought. The first step was a translation of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*, a task performed in such a way as to win the approval of the artist himself. Then followed the beautiful *Life of Schiller*, which Goethe valued so highly that he had it translated into German under his own eye. Thus encouraged, Carlyle produced in the periodicals of the day a series of essays, principally on German Literature, which now stand as the first four volumes of *Miscellanies*, in the complete editions of his works. The merits of these essays we shall have to consider further on ; at present we are concerned with the outward circumstances of the writer.

In the year 1826 Carlyle had married. It was a step which meant more for one of his nature even than for other men, and, unpleasant as the subject has become, we cannot entirely pass over it.

Mrs. Carlyle was a singularly gifted woman, with a sense of duty hardly less strong than her husband's. At the time of their marriage she was considerably above him in social position, though her own generosity had left her no superiority in worldly wealth. Had she remained single, or married an ordinary man, she would probably have risen into note as a woman of talent. Her critical abilities were really great, her power of fascination

conspicuous. By the side of her husband's genius she was, of course, dwarfed; she was Mrs. Carlyle, and nothing more.

The clouds of reproach which have burst over the husband of this woman shape themselves into two distinct accusations. He is said to have married her without being in love with her, and to have treated her with carelessness, if not with actual cruelty.

As to the first charge, it is of course no answer to say that thousands of men have done the like without being blamed for it. A man who poses as a teacher of the multitude cannot escape by conforming to the standard of the multitude. And certainly Carlyle would have rejected such a defence with scorn.

What, then, is the evidence? Apparently, one fragment written in late life by Mrs. Carlyle in a private note-book, from which it appears that Carlyle, in criticising one of Thackeray's novels, had spoken lightly of "*the thing called love*."<sup>9</sup> Mrs. Carlyle was a sorely-tried woman, and we can forgive her for taking in far too literal a sense an isolated expression of opinion. But that a biographer should bring a serious charge against the man he professes to reverence, without showing better warrant than this, is altogether too disgraceful. Mr. Froude is really to blame for the indecent outburst of joy that took place on the publication of the biography. The people who had been stung by the arrows of Carlyle's wrath, but

<sup>9</sup> *First Forty*, vol i., p. 285.

who had not had the grace to be thankful for the wounds, saw their chance of revenge. This man, who had preached such a high gospel in such an uncomfortably forcible way—he was after all no better than other people. How delightful! There may have been, among the shrewdest, a few who saw that it was not Carlyle, but his biographer, that was to blame. In truth Mr. Froude, by his way of treating the subject, has managed to leave an impression which is entirely unwarranted by the evidence. He has unrivalled opportunities of knowing the real state of the case, yet he never produces any substantial ground for his criticisms. He is continually maundering on through moral platitudes about the marriages of men of genius, coming back again and again to the subject, like a wasp to a rotten apple, till at last the reader is brought to believe that Carlyle married his wife for the same reasons that actuated him in buying a horse. And all this from a hasty note of a vaguely reported conversation.

On the other side there is abundant evidence. Carlyle's letters to his wife, extending over long years, are some of the tenderest and most affectionate epistles in the English language. Nothing but consummate hypocrisy could have fabricated such letters. Carlyle could not be a day absent from his wife without writing her every detail of his occupations. On each birthday he offered her a little gift, with the most humble entreaties for its acceptance. The memoir which he wrote in his latest years is



filled with the most exquisite details, such as love alone could have noticed. It is true that he would not sacrifice his conscience to her wishes, but what would such a woman as Mrs. Carlyle have thought of the man who could have stooped to that? Carlyle might with justice adopt the noble tone of the old Cavalier poet:—

I could not love thee, Dear, so much,  
Loved I not Honour more.

With the second charge the case is much the same. Mr. Froude treats us to whole pages of disquisition, but to hardly a word of proof. We may admit, at once, that, whatever her faults, nothing would have justified Carlyle in treating with neglect or unkindness the woman who had devoted her life to his welfare. That Mrs. Carlyle was offended—unreasonably many will think—by the attention her husband paid to the wishes of Lady Harriet Baring, is quite clear. In her anger she meditated the extreme step of a separation. Whether she was justified is quite another matter. The offence consisted in the visits of Carlyle to the house of a woman who had shown him real kindness, and who took a delight in his society. Mrs. Carlyle was always welcome in her husband's company, and could hardly blame him for an absence which her own refusal to join him had caused. For the rest, the quarrels seem to exist mainly in Mr. Froude's imagination. Mrs. Carlyle was often unhappy, but there might be many reasons for that. Carlyle was not what is generally termed a cheerful man. Mrs. Carlyle found life

hard, but to her husband it was not a bed of roses. Yet there is one piece of criticism on this sad subject which ought not to be overlooked. It comes from one who was friendly enough to both parties to rejoice in their happiness, but who was far too keen-sighted to be deceived by appearances. In the diary which Emerson kept during his second visit to England, under date October 1847, he wrote these words:—"C. and his wife live on beautiful terms. Their ways are very engaging, and, in her bookcase, all his books are inscribed to her, as they came from year to year, each with some significant line."<sup>10</sup>

This was written just twelve months after the Baring episode, and with the charitable hope which it suggests we might leave the subject, were it not that justice demands a word on Carlyle's side of the case.

Whether or not Carlyle was in love with his wife, it stands on her own confession that she was not in love with him. She had been passionately attached to Edward Irving before she made her husband's acquaintance, and Irving's foolishness alone prevented a marriage. With her usual fatal accuracy she has pronounced her own condemnation: "I married for ambition. Carlyle has exceeded all that my wildest hopes ever imagined of him—and I am miserable."<sup>11</sup>

It is a relief to turn from this sad, though probably exaggerated topic, to one charming incident, the last

<sup>10</sup> *Correspondence of Carlyle and Emerson*, vol. ii., p. 148.

<sup>11</sup> *First Forty*, vol. i., p. 291.



we shall notice in Carlyle's early life. In the year 1833 Emerson, then young and unknown, took up his pilgrim's staff and journeyed to the wilderness of Craigenputtock, where Carlyle was living in solitary state. He had heard the prophet's voice over three thousand miles of sea, and had recognized the ring of genius. To America undoubtedly belongs, with Germany, the honour of discovering Carlyle before his own countrymen were aware of him. "A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country."

It is a striking incident, too, this visit of Emerson's, made all the more picturesque by his own simple way of telling it. He came unannounced, walked with Carlyle over the heather, and as they went they talked of all things in heaven and earth. Who does not know the keen joy of unrestrained talk with a brother soul?—as different from "conversation" as Niagara from a scent-squirt! Emerson stayed but a few hours. Like a flash of light he came and went, and we can fancy how Carlyle would muse over his visit, comparing it with the life of man—"out of eternity, into eternity." But the deed was touching and grateful, and the lonely prophet could count another human soul which his words had reached.

For the rest, his lot had hardly been genial. He was now (1834) nearly forty years old, and still a vagabond in the earth. The same inflexible resolution to be altogether true had shut him out from one employment after another. It is remarkable

that, even in this period of his obscurity, no one who came into contact with him ever questioned his genius. The little work of his that was accepted was paid for at a higher rate than that of any other craftsman ; yet, even with this tribute to his merits, the world could find no place for him. He would not say or do the smallest thing which he did not believe to be true, and so men found him impracticable, for they believed in truth only theoretically. He was passed over for this and that humble employment, in favour of this and that conventional nonentity. His overflowing generosity, too, had sorely tried his resources. With scarcely sufficient money for his bare wants, he was supporting his brother in a costly course of education. He might have had wealth and place, if only he would have fallen down and worshipped. After forty days and nights of fasting, he was tempted of the devil—in the shape of Jeffrey. Jeffrey really wished him well, according to his light. He recognized Carlyle's transcendent abilities. If he would only suppress those uncomfortable sayings of his which made every one shudder, if he would but be *something*, Whig, Political Economist, even Radical, something with a ticket on it, he might become even as Macaulay, with his prospective peerage and his present ten thousand a-year. Carlyle must have been more than human if these temptations had been without attractions for him. He saw clearly the necessity for earning a living, he was no ascetic. He had his wife to care for, his family to help. He knew he could do easily

the work for which many men were paid so highly. But he had nailed his colours to the mast. Anything that was honest and thorough, without sham or futility about it, that he would gladly do, however humble the task. But be anything or do anything which his inmost conviction told him was false or cowardly, that he would not. And so he was left for many days in the wilderness.

## II.

We have now reached the fulness of the time at which the prophet is to descend from his watch-tower and go up and down in the world. It will be of the first importance to see if we can understand something of the spiritual equipment of the man who is henceforward to be such a striking figure.

In this task, as always, we must be careful to begin at the right point. Carlyle complains<sup>12</sup> of Archdeacon Hare that in his biography of his friend, he "takes up Sterling as a clergyman merely," that is to say, he gives us an entirely false idea of the man by insisting on only one aspect, and that not the most important aspect, of his character. Carlyle has suffered from a similar error. He has been treated as a speculative philosopher rather than as a moral force. The "Jubilee" critic of the *Daily News*, in his summary of the literary characters of the half-century, was kind enough to say that "Carlyle was a very considerable thinker up to a certain point." And the thousands of intelligent readers who resort

<sup>12</sup> *Life of Sterling*, p. 3.

to the leading articles of the *Daily News* for mental pabulum will doubtless be confirmed in the impression that Carlyle was a sort of English Emerson or Novalis. With the modest assertion of the *Daily News* critic, regarded as an isolated statement, I surely have no wish to quarrel. It is doubtless quite true that "Carlyle was a very considerable thinker up to a certain point," and we need not enquire too particularly whether that point is to be fixed within his critic's range of mental vision or beyond it. What it is necessary to notice is, that to figure Carlyle as a speculative reasoner about the conditions of the universe is to fall completely wide of any approach to an understanding of his position.

Still more misleading is it to look at Carlyle as a man of letters in the shallower sense of the term, that is, as a man whose chief possession is his writing faculty. His literary gifts were supremely splendid; we shall have occasion to examine them later on. But he was not a literary man in the sense that De Quincey, Macaulay, Hazlitt, Lamb, and Leigh Hunt, all of them his contemporaries, were literary men. For this class, if the truth must be told, he had no little contempt. Carlyle wrote books because after many trials he found that this was the one way in which he could deliver his message to the world, the only career allowed him by the conditions of his time. For intellect, as he has himself impressed upon us, "is not a *tool*, but a *hand* that can handle any tool."<sup>13</sup> Had Carlyle lived in the fifteenth century he would

<sup>13</sup> *Diderot*, "Miscellanies," vol. v., p. 45.

have been a Savonarola; in the sixteenth, a Luther or a William the Silent; in the seventeenth, a Cromwell; in the eighteenth, a Friedrich of Prussia.

This is but to say again that in Carlyle's moral character we must look for the secret of his force.

We have seen before that the groundwork of this character was its love of truth. Perhaps it is more exact to say that this quality had at first been developed principally on its negative side, as the hatred of falsehood. It had hitherto been seen chiefly in his refusal to make the smallest concession to social conventions. But it also had been secretly working in the indefatigable industry with which Carlyle had read all manner of attainable books. History, philosophy, science, poetry, even fiction, of Greece, Rome, England, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, had been stored up with amazing facility in the depths of his mind. Never was a man less of a pedant, yet no man ever shrank less from the most revolting drudgery in his search after the truth. The gigantic range of his knowledge must strike every reader of Carlyle's works, no less than the natural way in which his references seem to float off him, as mere excess of mental wealth.

But another and more concentrated quality had grown up in Carlyle during that long sojourn in the wilderness. Amid so much that was uncertain and contradictory in philosophy and science, he came to rest with delight on this one fact, that a man's duty from day to day is tolerably plain to him. If he confuse himself with speculations as to the origin



### 34 *Thomas Carlyle and John Stuart Mill.*

and sanction of duty, he may well happen to fall into uncertainty; but the plain man, who simply *looks* for his duty, will always find it. So the "Infinite Nature of Duty" became to Carlyle a fundamental fact, a thing to be held fast, obeyed, and venerated. This belief transfigured all work in his eyes; the roughest toil, the humblest service, was beautiful in this light. The man he delighted to honour was the man who wasted no time in pointing to his work, or discussing it, or trying to find a way out of it, but simply did it, and then turned to "doe the nexte thyng." "Such knowledge of the *transcendental*, unmeasurable character of Duty we call the basis of all Gospels, the essence of all Religion: he who with his whole soul knows not this, as yet knows nothing, as yet *is* properly nothing."<sup>14</sup>

This was no theoretic fancy of Carlyle's. His life was one long industry. Let a thing appear to be his plain duty, and he set about it, and finished it, regardless of difficulties. He had to write an article on Diderot, and he thought it a matter of course to read through his "twenty-one octavos" as a preparation.<sup>15</sup> At the age of sixty-three it appeared to him that he ought to write a history of Friedrich of Prussia. With indefatigable energy he set to work, and, after thirteen years of toil, produced a book which has filled every competent critic in Europe with admiring amazement. Join together this

<sup>14</sup> *Johnson*, "Miscellanies," vol. iv., p. 109.

<sup>15</sup> *First Forty*, vol. ii., p. 277.

reverent passion for work with the other feature of intense hatred of falsehood, and we have in some measure accounted for the fact that Carlyle's labours are abundant in quantity and sterling in quality.

But there was another feature of his character which perhaps still more marked him as one apart from the world of his day. With all his being he believed in God. Summing up the results of his vast readings in the Bible of History, he could pronounce, with an emphasis which sounded strange to the men of his time, "Verily He is a God that judgeth in the earth." Intuitionist as he confessedly was,<sup>16</sup> he drew this belief from the deepest study of external events; it was a conclusion from the most rigorous and indefatigable process of induction. "Might and right do differ frightfully from hour to hour; but give them centuries to try it in, they are found to be identical."<sup>17</sup> And again: "With a nation, when the multitude of the chances covers, in a great measure, the uncertainty of chance, it may be said to hold always that general suffering is the fruit of general misbehaviour, general dishonesty."<sup>18</sup> This belief he held and enforced with a passionate persistence which is almost unrivalled in modern times. His faith was not a Sunday suit of clothes, but an inward light, which brought him safely through the quicksands on which his contemporaries were

<sup>16</sup> "A man's ultimate monition comes only from within."—*Carlyle and Emerson*, vol. i., p. 217; and see pp. 352 and 353.

<sup>17</sup> *Chartism*, p. 158.

<sup>18</sup> *Count Cagliostro*, "Miscellanies," vol. v., p. 85.

wrecked. It is hardly necessary to say that Carlyle did not express his belief in a theological formula. Sterling had reproached him for not believing in a "personal God." With characteristic vehemence Carlyle had replied: "Personal! Impersonal! One! Three! *What* meaning can any mortal (after all) attach to them in reference to *such* an object? *Wer darf Ihn* NENNEN? I dare not and do not."<sup>19</sup> He saw that by quarrelling about formulas men lost their hold on the reality. He reserved himself for the reality, and his faith was as strong as that of Isaiah or Ezekiel. What God was, or how we knew Him,—whether as force, tendency, tradition,—he did not care to enquire, but his whole life was filled with His presence.

This then is the core of Carlyle's moral character. He believed in truth, work, and a God of justice. And this is really the key-point of his position, the thing indispensable to know if we would understand Carlyle. But there are two of his intellectual qualities which we must also notice before proceeding with his career.

The first of these we may call Insight or Imagination. With Carlyle truth was a sensation rather than a conclusion. His eye pierced through the most formidable and repulsive rubbish heaps, and saw at once the jewel that lay beneath. This faculty is most strikingly shown in his judgment of character. It has been said that Carlyle's portraits live before us. They live to us because they lived to him. He

<sup>19</sup> *Last Forty*, vol. i., p. 43.



found Cromwell, as generally figured by English writers, an absurd mass of inconsistencies; a man without ability, who from a country farmer became ruler of England; a hypocrite who was willing to shed his blood in the cause of religion,—a thing impossible in fact. Carlyle looked at the man, saw through the obscurities which prejudice had raised up, and boldly declared Cromwell to be a hero. It was a rash thing to do, but so irresistible was his demonstration that the judgment of the nation veered round in obedience to it. So it was with Friedrich Wilhelm of Prussia. Macaulay was the most popular and trusted historian of the day. The theory of causation was probably included among the articles of his creed. Yet this man pronounced Friedrich Wilhelm, the organizer of Prussia, the conqueror of Charles XII., the protector of the Heidelberg and the Salzburg Protestants, to be a mere savage pedant, occupied principally with committing violent assaults on the members of his family, and crimping tall grenadiers. In the teeth of this verdict Carlyle tears aside the rugged features of the outer Friedrich Wilhelm, goes right down into the midst of his troubles and difficulties, declares him to be a man of genius, and justifies his judgment by one of the most vivid and life-like of historical portraits.

The second quality, closely connected with this gift of insight, is one for which it is very hard to find an expressive name, perhaps because the quality itself is so unhappily rare. "Idealism" may possibly serve as a suggestion of the profound impression made

on Carlyle by common events and things. ' It is the quality hinted at in Wordsworth's familiar lines :—

A primrose on the river's brim  
A yellow primrose was to him,  
And it was nothing more.

Take the extremely common phenomenon known as man. To the ordinary observer a human being is a "forked radish with a curiously carved head," or at most an entity possessing certain limited qualities and capabilities. To the physiologist a man is a collection of intricate tissues known as flesh, blood, bones, and the like. To the psychologist he is a complicated series of mental phenomena hanging on the thread of memory. Carlyle looked upon the matter in a different light.

" 'To the eye of vulgar Logic,' " says he (*Teufelsdröckh*), " 'what is man? An omnivorous biped that wears breeches. To the eye of Pure Reason what is he? A Soul, a Spirit, and divine Apparition. Round his mysterious Me, there lies, under all those wool-rags, a Garment of Flesh (or of Senses), contextured in the Loom of Heaven; whereby he is revealed to his like, and dwells with them in Union and Division; and sees and fashions for himself a Universe, with azure Starry Spaces, and long Thousands of Years. Deep hidden is he under that strange garment; amid Sounds and Colours and Forms, as it were, swathed in, and inextricably over-shrouded: yet it is sky-woven, and worthy of a God. Stands he not thereby in the centre of Immensities, in the conflux of Eternities? He feels; power has been given him to know, to believe; nay, does not the spirit of Love, free in its celestial primeval brightness, even there, though but for moments, look through? Well said St. Chrysostom, with his lips of gold, "The true SHEKINAH is Man:" where else is the GOD'S-PRESENCE manifested, not to our eyes only, but to our hearts, as in our fellow-man?' " <sup>20</sup>

The significance of man, indeed, is a subject he is

<sup>20</sup> *Sartor Resartus*, p. 44.

never weary of dwelling on. Every human being is "hung on a moment of Time between two Eternities;" "he waited a whole Eternity to be born, and now has a whole Eternity waiting to see what he will do when born." But Carlyle was not less profoundly impressed by the sights of Nature. As the only way in which this feature of his character can be explained is by illustration, we may venture one more quotation. It comes from the inimitable essay called *The Diamond Necklace*, and was probably provoked by the foolish talk, at one time fashionable, about the necessary disappearance of poetry and the Romantic from an enlightened and scientific world. It was bad enough for a second-rate critic like Hazlitt to predict such things, but when Keats, whose work was disproof positive of such a vaticination, gave the sanction of his name to the foreboding, it was time for some one to speak out. This is Carlyle's answer to the prophets of evil:—

"In our own poor Nineteenth Century the writer of these lines has been fortunate enough to see not a few glimpses of Romance; he imagines this Nineteenth is hardly a whit less romantic than that Ninth, or any other, since centuries began. Apart from Napoleon, and the Dantons, and Mirabeaus, whose fire-words of public speaking, and fire-whirlwinds of cannon and musketry, which for a season darkened the air, are perhaps at bottom but superficial phenomena, he has witnessed, in remotest places, much that could be called romantic, even miraculous. He has witnessed overhead the infinite Deep, with greater and lesser lights, bright-rolling, silent-beaming, hurled forth by the Hand of God: around him and under his feet, the wonderfulest Earth, with her winter snow-storms and her summer spice-airs; and, unaccountablest of all, *himself* standing there. He stood in the lapse of Time; he

saw Eternity behind him and before him. The all-encircling mysterious tide of Force, thousandfold (for from force of Thought to force of Gravitation what an interval!) billowed shoreless on; bore him too along with it,—he too was part of it. From its bosom rose and vanished, in perpetual change, the lordliest Real Phantasmagory, which men term *Being*; and ever anew rose and vanished; and ever that lordliest many-coloured scene was full, another yet the same. Oak-trees fell, young acorns sprang. Men too, new sent from the Unknown, he met, of tiniest size, who waxed into stature, into strength of sinew, passionate fire and light: in other men the light was growing dim, the sinews all feeble; they sank, motionless, into ashes, into invisibility; returned *back* to the Unknown, beckoning him their mute farewell. He wanders still by the parting spot; cannot hear them; they are far, how far!—

“It was a sight for angels, and archangels; for, indeed, God Himself had made it wholly. One many-glancing asbestos-thread in the web of Universal History, spirit-woven, it rustled there, as with the howl of mighty winds, through that ‘wild-roaring Loom of Time.’ Generation after generation, hundreds of them or thousands of them, from the unknown Beginning, so loud, so stormful-busy, rushed torrent-wise, thundering down, down; and fell all silent, nothing but some feeble reëcho, which grew ever feebler, struggling up; and oblivion swallowed them *all*. Thousands more, to the unknown Ending, will follow: and *thou* here, of this present one, hangest as a drop, still sungilt, on the giddy edge, one moment, while the Darkness has not yet engulfed thee. O Brother! is *that* what thou callest prosaic; of small interest?”<sup>21</sup>

The force of this imagination is so vivid that we might almost feel tempted to say of Carlyle as the Veronese of Dante, *Eccovi l'uom ch'è stato all'Inferno*. It is so true as to be raised entirely above the level of fancy. The materials made use of are the simplest and most widely acknowledged facts. The passage is no more fiction than are the revelations of the microscope.

<sup>21</sup> *The Diamond Necklace*, “Miscellanies,” vol. v., p. 134.

Such was the gospel Carlyle was about to announce to the world. What was his title to stand forward as a teacher of men?

The essays he had already written were probably more or less known. Most of them were on literary subjects, and though they displayed great knowledge and considerable skill, were not in themselves sufficient to warrant the inference of great originality. Still there were passages here and there which ought to have put the disciples of Bentham on their guard. "Mr. Taylor is simply what they call a *Philister*; every fibre of him is Philistine. With us such men usually take to Politics, and become Code-makers and Utilitarians."<sup>22</sup> And the writer looks forward to the time when "in our inward world there will again be a sunny Firmament and verdant Earth, as well as a Pantry and culinary Fire."<sup>23</sup>

Still more in two remarkable essays upon the condition of society, entitled *Signs of the Times* and *Characteristics*, had Carlyle flashed out strange rays. In the first of these he had ventured to christen the times the "Mechanical Age," to taunt the Economists with the flagrant contradiction of their theories by patent facts, to speak of "the mighty interest taken in *mere political arrangements*,"<sup>24</sup> and to sum up his indictment in the charge that "in the management of external things we excel all

<sup>22</sup> *Historic Survey of German Poetry*, "Miscellanies," vol. iii., p. 241.

<sup>23</sup> *State of German Literature*, *ibid.*, p. 216.

<sup>24</sup> *Signs of the Times*, *ibid.*, vol. ii., p. 239.



other ages ; while in whatever respects the pure moral nature, in true dignity of soul and character, we are perhaps inferior to most civilized ages.”<sup>25</sup> This criticism must have sounded strange to the readers of the *Edinburgh Review*, accustomed as they were to felicitations on an “Age of Progress,” as to which pleasing theory Carlyle aptly enough reminds them, that while it is probable that the happiness and greatness of mankind have on the whole progressed, it by no means follows that a particular nation at a particular time is in a condition of advance.

The *Characteristics* was still more outspoken. Carlyle here says boldly that the age, which is pluming itself upon its advance in wealth, philosophy, and enlightenment, is in an essentially unhealthy state, of which this very self-analysis and self-laudation is evidence. “The healthy know not of their health, but only the sick,”—this is the text of the discourse. The diseases of society, “physical and spiritual,” are pointed out in the plainest language.

“Wealth has accumulated itself into masses ; and Poverty, also in accumulation enough, lies impassably separated from it ; opposed, uncommunicating, like forces in positive and negative poles. The gods of this lower world still sit aloft on glittering thrones, less happy than Epicurus’ gods, but as indolent, as impotent ; while the boundless living chaos of Ignorance and Hunger welters terrific in its dark fury, under their feet. How much among us might be likened to a whited sepulchre ; outwardly all pomp and strength ; but inwardly full of horror, and despair, and dead-men’s bones ! Iron highways, with their wains fire-winged, are uniting all ends of the firm Land ; quays and moles, with their innumer-

<sup>25</sup> *Signs of the Times*, “Miscellanies,” vol. ii., p. 245.

able stately fleets, tame the Ocean into our pliant bearer of burdens ; Labour's thousand arms, of sinew and of metal, all-conquering everywhere, from the tops of the mountains down to the depths of the mine and the caverns of the sea, ply unweariedly for the service of man ; yet man remains unserved. He has subdued this Planet, his inhabitation and his inheritance ; yet reaps no profit from the victory." <sup>26</sup>

The aspect of the spiritual condition is no more satisfactory. In religion men are discoursing of the evidences instead of doing the works : " The most enthusiastic Evangelicals do not preach a Gospel, but keep describing how it should and might be preached. . . . Considered as a whole, the Christian Religion of late ages has been continually dissipating itself into Metaphysics." <sup>27</sup> Literature has become a thing of advertising, inspiration has given place to affectation, view-hunting thrives. The popularity of metaphysics is another sign of this morbid introspective condition. " Metaphysics is the attempt of the mind to rise above the mind." <sup>28</sup>

In this state of affairs, men go various ways. Some accept a purely material view, deciding that " nothing is certain in the world except this fact of Pleasure being pleasant,"—which fact they determine to make good use of. Others, " to whom the Universe is not a warehouse, or at best a fancy bazaar, but a mystic temple and hall of doom," <sup>29</sup> are sorely perplexed. Some take up with " worn out symbols of the Godlike ;" others " have dared to

<sup>26</sup> *Characteristics*, "Miscellanies," vol. iv., p. 18.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

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say No, and cannot yet say Yea," the fate of these being hard enough.

This picture is dark, but it is worth noting, by those who sum up Carlyle as a dyspeptic pessimist, that now, when the glow of youth was long over, when his own prospects were at their very lowest, he ends this prophecy, in which he has shown such a full appreciation of the evils of the time, with a note of high promise:—

"A Faith in Religion has again become possible and inevitable for the scientific mind; and the word *Free-Thinker* no longer means the Denier or Caviller, but the Believer, or the Ready to believe."<sup>30</sup> . . . "Here on Earth we are as Soldiers, fighting in a foreign land; that understand not the plan of the campaign, and have no need to understand it; seeing well what is at our hand to be done. Let us do it like soldiers; with submission, with courage, with a heroic joy. 'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might.' Behind us, behind each one of us, lie Six Thousand Years of human effort, human conquest; before us is the boundless Time, with its as yet uncreated and unconquered Continents and Eldorados, which we, even we, have to conquer, to create; and from the bosom of Eternity there shine for us celestial guiding stars."<sup>31</sup>

### III.

Here were evidences of originality and power, had the world chosen to see them. But there was one question which in any case the world had a right to ask, which any man has a right to ask of one who offers to act as his guide. What had been the fate of Carlyle's own search after light? Sympathy is the only real key to human hearts, and the sufferer

<sup>30</sup> *Characteristics*, p. 36.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.



shrinks from assistance proffered by a hand which never felt the pain. Had Carlyle himself been through the furnace of affliction? Had he tossed in the fever which he saw to be parching men's souls? How had he found relief?

The answers to these questions are to be gathered from the pages of *Sartor Resartus*, which had then just appeared in the numbers of *Fraser*. This wonderful work, the picture of a soul struggling towards the light, is the record of Carlyle's experience in the land of darkness. By it his right to speak is fully vindicated, for, unlike *Werter* and *Childe Harold*, it does not leave us with intenser despair in the midst of our troubles, but takes us through and beyond them to the other side. This fact is well worthy of notice as evidence of Carlyle's character. It is easy to make out a strong case against life; the difficulty lies in pointing to the remedy. It may possibly be a relief to the sufferer to go over his woes with him, to paint his troubles in deeper colours than he himself can devise for them; but the real duty of the physician is, after all, to effect a cure.

Few books have caused such difficulty to critics as *Sartor*. By an enthusiastic admirer it has been termed the greatest book in the English language; by a contemporary it was spoken of as "d—d stuff."<sup>32</sup> The greatest book in the English language it certainly is not, for it deals too exclusively with the special conditions of a particular time. The

<sup>32</sup> *First Forty*, vol. ii., p. 430.

first rank in literature is reserved for works which handle the things vital to all mankind in all ages, the daily life, the familiar sights and sounds of nature, the great passions and hopes of all men. But just as certainly *Sartor* is not "d—d stuff;" anything but that, as those who have felt its value can testify. It will be worth while to try and get a fair understanding of it.

As to the substance, it is, as we have said, the record of a soul struggling towards the light, passing from careless unconsciousness to anxiety, from anxiety to doubt, from doubt to denial and despair; then suddenly finding the turning-point and reaching firm ground. In its form, it is a myth; we must look for its truth in the idea, not in the details. Carlyle is using the undoubted right of every author to convey his meaning in the vehicle which seems to him most suitable. There is profound truth in the parable, but the truth is in the meaning, not in its dress:—

Märchen, noch so wunderbar,  
Dichterkünste machen's wahr.

*Sartor* appears as the *Life and Writings of Herr Teufelsdröckh*,—an entirely imaginary person, it need hardly at this period be said, except that the picture is so vividly drawn that it is even now occasionally mistaken for a portrait.<sup>33</sup> This plan has enabled Carlyle to impart as much of his own history as he wishes, and at the same time to add any fictitious circumstances needed to convey his thoughts.

<sup>33</sup> I have heard the sayings of the "German Professor Teufelsdröckh" quoted with approval in a London pulpit.

His manner of treating the scheme is throughout masterly. Wild conjectures, thrown out merely as guesses, which would have sounded absurd from an Englishman of his day, come with perfect propriety from the mouth of the mysterious little figure which haunts the *Gasthaus Zur Grünen Ganz*, in the mythical university-town of *Weissnichtwo*. It would be a grateful task to put together some picture of Teufelsdröckh from the scattered touches which lie in the pages of *Sartor*, but we are bound to consider here the meaning rather than the form of the work.

The parable has two sides, one speculative, and the other practical or moral. The idea of the former is simple, though it is worked out with great force of detail. It may be stated briefly as "the world in clothes." The idea, of course, was not entirely new. Swift, in his *Tale of a Tub*, had suggested the universe as "a large suit of clothes which invests everything,"<sup>34</sup> this view being maintained by a sect who worshipped at the throne of the Tailor and Goose. But Swift made little use of the notion, being satisfied with a superficial application of the train of thought which it suggested. By Carlyle it is worked out with a completeness which leads to the most striking results. Teufelsdröckh has a "humour of looking at all Matter and Material Things as Spirit,"<sup>35</sup> and in this mood all matter is regarded as so much clothes, or accessories, of the spirit which it em-

<sup>34</sup> Swift, *Tale of a Tub*, sect. ii.

<sup>35</sup> *Sartor*, p. 19.

bodies. "The thing Visible, nay the thing Imagined, the thing in any way conceived as Visible, what is it but a Garment, a clothing of the higher, celestial, invisible, unimaginable, formless, dark with excess of bright."<sup>36</sup> The grand mistake of the world is that it has come to look upon the accessory as the principal. It wraps garment after garment over a man, garments of office and honour, and so loses sight of the man himself. It is the same in the world of thought and feeling; each thought is invested with a formula, each feeling with a symbol, and then the formula and the symbol only are seen, and men forget that there is, or once was, anything else in them. And so the reality does die out, and they remain, like empty husks, a source of ill-understood uneasiness and dissatisfaction—in short, mere shams.

But it is not with this side of *Sartor*, interesting as it is, that we are most concerned. It is the practical aspect of it that illustrates Carlyle's position.

This is mainly to be found in the second book, which treats of the life of Teufelsdröckh. The author has prepared us for a rather ragged story by an amusing description of his materials as contained in—

"six considerable PAPER-BAGS, carefully sealed, and marked successively, in gilt China-ink, with the symbols of the six southern Zodiacal Signs, beginning at Libra; in the inside of which sealed Bags lie miscellaneous masses of Sheets, and oftener Shreds and Snips, written in Professor Teufelsdröckh's scarce legible *cursiv-schrift*; and treating of all imaginable

<sup>36</sup> *Sartor*, p. 45.

things under the Zodiac and above it, but of his own personal history only at rare intervals, and then in the most enigmatic manner."<sup>37</sup>

Nevertheless the story when it does come is clear enough.

Teufelsdröckh is a little foundling, delivered one evening by a mysterious stranger to the care of old Andreas Futteral, ex-grenadier sergeant and regimental schoolmaster in the Prussian service, and the good Gretchen his wife, now living in placid retirement in the village of *Entepfuhl*. All enquiries fail to discover the genealogy of the little stranger, who, after learning his own story, always keeps up a pathetic half-despairing hope of some day meeting with his real father. A beautiful sketch follows of the period of a childhood, unconscious, yet not altogether without wonder at the sights and sounds of Nature. Very skilfully is introduced the first glimpse of the dark side of things.

"Nevertheless, I were but a vain dreamer to say, that even then my felicity was perfect. I had, once for all, come down from Heaven into the Earth. Among the rainbow colours that glowed on my horizon, lay even in childhood a dark ring of Care, as yet no thicker than a thread, and often quite overshadowed; yet always it reappeared, nay, ever waxing broader and broader; till in after years it almost overshadowed my whole canopy, and threatened to engulf me in final night. It was the ring of Necessity whereby we are all begirt; happy he for whom a kind heavenly Sun brightens it into a ring of Duty, and plays round it with beautiful prismatic diffractions; yet ever, as basis and as bourn for our whole being, it is there."<sup>38</sup>

Meanwhile the young Teufelsdröckh lays out

<sup>37</sup> *Sartor*, p. 52.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

his "very copper pocket-money on stall-literature," which, as it accumulates, "he with his own hands sews into volumes." He soon strides past the village schoolmaster, and is sent to the *Hinterschlag-Gymnasium*, an institution on which he comments unfavourably. "The Hinterschlag Professors knew syntax enough; and of the human soul this much: that it had a faculty called Memory, and could be acted on through the muscular integument by appliance of birch-rods."<sup>39</sup> It is much the same at the nameless university which succeeds the *Hinterschlag-Gymnasium*. "The hungry young looked up to their spiritual Nurses, and, for food, were bidden to eat the east-wind."<sup>40</sup> Teufelsdröckh and the friend whom he makes here mourn over this unsatisfactory state of things, and work out the best conclusion possible, namely, to do the utmost they can towards educating themselves. "Here are Books, and we have brains to read them; here is a whole Earth and a whole Heaven, and we have eyes to look on them. *Frisch zu!*"<sup>41</sup> In the striking and humorous criticism of the university,<sup>42</sup> as well as in the resolution arrived at, those who know the details of Carlyle's early years will see that he was making use of his own experiences.

At the university Teufelsdröckh begins that long course of painful enquiry which afterwards brings him down to the depths. Here, too, he opens the question which always looms so largely over the

<sup>39</sup> *Sartor*, p. 73.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 76-79.



horizon of a poor man—How shall I earn a living? The immediate answer, accepted with small faith in its permanence, is the profession of the law, a course which, as we know, Carlyle once attempted. Teufelsdröckh's abilities are recognized, but his originality is too great to be appreciated: the world is willing to be amused by him as a curiosity, but it does not see its way to help him. In society his shy pride and hatred of shams make him an awkward figure. He has the unpardonable gift of sarcasm, and occasionally uses it. He is requested to write an epitaph on a deceased notability, and, with a pedantic adhesion to historical accuracy, produces an inscription<sup>43</sup> over which thousands of readers have shrieked with laughter, but which would assuredly make the strangest figure in a well-conducted churchyard.

But the crowning offence is yet to come. Teufelsdröckh, almost a beggar, without connections, with no hope of employment, and with an exterior which makes the polite world shudder, has the audacity to fall in love with a fair dowerless maiden of (more or less) high degree. Whether this episode was consciously suggested by Carlyle's acquaintance with Margaret Gordon we need not trouble to speculate. No sketch of a type-life could be at all complete without the introduction of the well-nigh universal incident. Teufelsdröckh is not entirely despised by the fair one herself, but it is needless to say that her relatives, especially her

<sup>43</sup> *Sartor*, p. 91.

"Duenna Cousin, in whose meagre, hunger-bitten philosophy the religion of young hearts was, from the first, faintly approved of,"<sup>44</sup> soon put a stop to the affair. In these practical days parents and guardians do not enquire about a young man's character; their duty towards their daughters and wards leads them to take an interest only in his "plans and prospects."

This is the final stroke to any hopes Teufelsdröckh may have nourished of finding his calling by one of the conventional methods. Henceforth he is an outcast, and must pilgrim alone over untrodden ways to some City of Refuge. Urged by a "nameless Unrest," like Ió by the gadfly, he wanders up and down through the earth, seeking peace and finding none. The world tells him that it is his duty to seek happiness, but happiness seems to fly from him as he pursues it, and he is not without a suspicion that happiness, even if it could be attained, were hardly worthy to be considered the main object of a man's life.

"Is the heroic inspiration we name Virtue but some Passion; some bubble of the blood, bubbling in the direction others *profit* by? I know not, only this I know, If what thou namest Happiness be our true aim, then are we all astray. With stupidity and sound Digestion man may front much. But what, in these dull unimaginative days, are the terrors of Conscience to the diseases of the Liver! Not on Morality, but on Cookery, let us build our stronghold: there brandishing our frying-pan, as censer, let us offer sweet incense to the Devil, and live at ease on the fat things *he* has provided for his elect."<sup>45</sup>

With other philosophies it is the same. The

<sup>44</sup> *Sartor*, p. 101.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 112.



Teufelsdröckh who has "the humour of looking at all matter and material things as spirit," can hardly be expected to find absorption in any of the pursuits that satisfy men to whom a primrose is only a primrose. His position is too rare to attract fellow-sufferers ; he wanders on alone, down to the deepest gulfs of despair. One thing only saves him from absolute wreck—"I nevertheless still loved Truth, and would abate no jot of my allegiance to her. 'Truth!' I cried, 'though the Heavens crush me for following her ; no Falsehood ! though a whole celestial Lubberland were the price of Apostasy.'"<sup>46</sup> Of real religion he sees the beauty, nay the absolute necessity ; but he cannot believe in the reality of any existing form. His insatiable spirit of inquiry arises from a desire to know the truth, not from a wish to explain away a disagreeable duty.

At last there comes relief. After a fit of wild fear, in which his imagination has pictured to him a whole universe of nameless terrors, he suddenly asks himself, What, after all, is the worst that can befall me ? It would be a crime to attempt any paraphrase of such an essential passage :—

"Full of such humour, and perhaps the miserablest man in the whole French Capital or Suburbs, was I, one sultry Dog-day, after much perambulation, toiling along the dirty little *Rue Saint-Thomas de l'Enfer*, among civic rubbish enough, in a close atmosphere, and over pavements hot as Nebuchadnezzar's Furnace ; whereby doubtless my spirits were little cheered ; when, all at once, there rose a Thought in me, and I asked myself, 'What *art* thou afraid of ? Wherefore, like a coward, dost thou for ever pip and whimper, and go cowering

<sup>46</sup> *Sartor*, p. 113.

and trembling? Despicable biped! what is the sum-total of the worst that lies before thee? Death? Well, Death; and say the pangs of Tophet too, and all that the Devil and Man may, will, or can do against thee! Hast thou not a heart; canst thou not suffer whatsoever it be; and, as a Child of Freedom, though outcast, trample Tophet itself under thy feet, while it consumes thee? Let it come then; I will meet it and defy it!' And as I so thought, there rushed like a stream of fire over my whole soul, and I shook base Fear away from me for ever. I was strong, of unknown strength; a spirit, almost a god. Ever from that time the temper of my misery was changed; not fear or whining sorrow was it, but indignation, and grim, fire-eyed defiance.

"Thus had the EVERLASTING NO (*das ewige Nein*) pealed authoritatively through all the recesses of my being, my ME; and then it was that my whole ME stood up, in native God-created majesty, and with emphasis recorded its Protest. Such a Protest, the most important transaction in Life, may that same Indignation and Defiance, in a psychological point of view, be fitly called. The Everlasting No had said, 'Behold, thou art fatherless, outcast, and the Universe is mine (the Devil's);' to which my whole ME now made answer, 'I am not thine, but Free, and for ever hate thee!'"<sup>47</sup>

The importance of this passage for our immediate purpose is, that Carlyle has himself acknowledged it as an exact reproduction of his own experience.<sup>48</sup>

The extreme pressure is now relaxed. Teufelsdröckh can leave the ME with a grim indifference, and look into the NOT-ME which surrounds him. Accordingly we have a wonderful chapter of observation, by which we are made to feel instinctively that a kindly study of our fellow-creatures and the world around us is a wholesome relief from morbid introspection. But Carlyle does not leave us here. He has got as far

<sup>47</sup> *Sartor*, p. 116.

<sup>48</sup> *First Forty*, vol. i., p. 101.

as Voltaire; but he is by no means content with the negative philosophy of Ferney. He has come safely through the *Valley of the Shadow*; but he means to reach the *Delectable Mountains*. "Our wilderness is the wide world in an Atheistic Century, our Forty Days are long years of suffering and fasting; nevertheless, to these also comes an end. Yes, to me also was given, if not Victory, yet the consciousness of battle, and the resolve to persevere therein while life or faculty is left."<sup>49</sup> Again he attacks the problem of happiness, feeling that here lies the knot. It is the thing that all men strive after; it is likely, therefore, to have something to do with the universal dissatisfaction. The solution in this case too, as in the other, comes by a sudden inspiration. What, after all, do men mean by *happiness*? If it be the satisfaction of all conceivable desires, it is evidently vain to look for it so long as possibility continues to transcend actuality. But if, again, it be looked upon as a reward of merit, to be nicely apportioned to desert, there is a simple way out of the difficulty. What if the merits that men plume themselves on are extremely doubtful in character?

"I tell thee, Blockhead, it all comes of thy Vanity; of what thou fanciest those same deserts of thine to be. Fancy that thou deservest to be hanged (as is most likely), thou wilt feel it a happiness to be only shot; fancy that thou deservest to be hanged in a hair-halter, it will be a luxury to die in hemp. . . . Make thy claim of wages a zero, then; thou hast the world under thy feet. Well did the wisest of our time write: 'It is only with Renunciation (*Entsagen*) that life, properly speaking, can be said to begin.'"<sup>50</sup>

<sup>49</sup> *Sartor*, p. 127.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 132.

And once more :—

“ Foolish Soul ! what Act of Legislature was there that thou shouldest be happy ? A little while ago thou hadst no right to *be* at all. What if thou wert born and predestined not to be Happy, but to be Unhappy ! ” <sup>51</sup>

So by turning to the other side of the picture we get the answer to the riddle — not rights, but duties :—

“ Doubt of any sort cannot be removed except by action. Therefore, *Do the duty which lies nearest thee*, which thou knowest to be a duty ! Thy second duty will already have become clearer.” <sup>52</sup> “ Love not Pleasure ; love God. This is the EVERLASTING YEA, wherein all contradiction is solved : wherein whoso walks and works it is well with him.” <sup>53</sup>

This is not the place at which to discuss the value of Carlyle's teaching ; we are at present anxious to ascertain only what that teaching was. But I cannot forbear inserting, as commentary on the train of thought which led to the “ Everlasting Yea,” a passage, written indeed long afterwards, but relating almost to the same period as that in which Carlyle was then living, by Mill himself, till then an avowed apostle of the theory which Carlyle had just been denouncing. The words occur in that chapter of his *Autobiography* which corresponds most closely to the *Sartor* :—

“ Those only are happy (I thought) who have their minds fixed on some object other than their own happiness. . . . The only chance is to treat, not happiness, but some end external to it, as the purpose of life.” <sup>54</sup>

With the second book closes the vital part of

<sup>51</sup> *Sartor*, p. 132.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 133.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 135.

<sup>54</sup> *Autobiography*, p. 142.

*Sartor*, regarded as a picture of Carlyle's spiritual history. The remainder is occupied with wonderful speculations on institutions and social problems, which show that the writer has thought deeply and with great original force. The main idea is still the "Clothes-philosophy." Religion, politics, sociology, speculation of all kinds, are passed under review, and all found to be labouring under the same disease. Everywhere men mistake the shadow for the substance, the material for the spiritual. On all these questions Carlyle's views appear later on, and it will be better to treat them as applied teaching than as mere speculation. We have seen that the central precept of his teaching is simple—"Love not pleasure, love God." Let Duty, not Happiness, be the Ideal. And this will give us the key to his message. Nevertheless, that we may get some idea of the power and faculty with which that message was to be delivered, we may take one splendid passage as a specimen of the prophet's gifts. It occurs in the chapter entitled *Natural Supernaturalism*, in which the deepest questions that can agitate the mind of man are handled with a power of thought which can leave scoffers no excuse for pretending to despise the intellectual abilities of the man whose teaching so ill accords with their inclinations. Carlyle has been musing over immortality, space, and time; touching reverently, almost fearfully, the great mysteries of life. Suddenly he bursts out:—

"O Heaven! it is mysterious, it is awful to consider that we not only carry each a future Ghost within him, but are, in very



deed, Ghosts! These Limbs, whence had we them; this stormy Force; this life-blood with its burning Passion? They are dust and a shadow; a Shadow-system gathered round our ME; wherein, through some moments or years, the Divine essence is to be revealed in the Flesh. That warrior on his strong war-horse, fire flashes through his eyes; force dwells in his arm and heart; but warrior and war-horse are a vision; a revealed Force, nothing more. Stately they tread the Earth, as if it were a firm substance: fool, the Earth is but a film; it cracks in twain, and warrior and war-horse sink beyond the plummet's sounding. Plummet's! Fantasy herself will not follow them. A little while ago, they were not; a little while, and they are not—their very ashes are not.

“So has it been from the beginning, so will it be to the end. Generation after generation takes to itself the form of a Body; and forth-issuing from Cimmerian Night, on Heaven's mission APPEARS. What Force and Fire is in each he expends: one grinding in the Mill of Industry; one hunter-like climbing the giddy Alpine heights of Science; one madly dashed to pieces on the rocks of Strife, in war with his fellow:—and then the Heaven-sent is recalled; his earthly vesture falls away, and soon even to Sense becomes a vanished Shadow. Thus, like some wild-flaming, wild-thundering train of Heaven's artillery, does this mysterious MANKIND thunder and flame, in long-drawn, quick-succeeding grandeur, through the unknown Deep. Thus, like a God-created, fire breathing Spirit-host, we emerge from the Inane; haste stormfully across the astonished Earth; then plunge again into the Inane. Earth's mountains are levelled, and her seas filled up, in our passage: can the Earth, which is but dead, and a vision, resist Spirits which have reality and are alive? On the hardest adamant some footprint of us is stamped-in; the last Rear of the host will read traces of the earliest Van. But whence?—O Heaven, whither? Sense knows not; Faith knows not; only that it is through Mystery to Mystery, from God and to God.

*‘We are such stuff*

As dreams are made of, and our little Life  
Is rounded with a sleep.’”<sup>55</sup>

With these burning words on his lips, the prophet

<sup>55</sup> *Sartor*, pp. 184, 185.

descended from his lonely watch-tower, and took up his abode among men.

#### IV.

At first no one seemed to heed him. It is hard for an intelligent reader in these days to understand how the critics of those failed to discover that the author of *Sartor Resartus* was a man of genius in the best sense of the term. The real secret probably lay in the nature of the critics themselves. It needs, if not genius, at least great ability, to discover genius in a new form, and there was extremely little genius in the critical world of 1834. A generation which worshipped Macaulay was not likely to appreciate Carlyle. Strangely enough, in this new flight, as before, the first encouraging sign came from over the sea, from the America about which Carlyle often said hard things.

The struggle of life was as stern as ever. It was the old story of the fight between conscience and convention. Temptation came now in the form of an offer of a post on the *Times*, a prospect which to the natural man must have been alluring enough. Carlyle had to live by his pen, he was within small distance of actual want, and here was an offer from the first and the most generous journal of the day. But the tacit conditions were fatal. The writer in the *Times* must accept the creed of the *Times*, and in this creed Carlyle did not, could not, believe. So he gratefully declined the offer, and turned resolutely to face poverty again. With some people it is necessary



to go into details. They do not understand moral heroism unless it results in a pecuniary sacrifice. For such people this incident may be instructive, and difficult to get over. For those who understand Carlyle it will pass, as an act to be admired indeed, but almost as a thing of course.

Carlyle was ultimately preserved from bankruptcy by a scheme devised by one of his few really sincere friends—a plan of public lecturing. The experiment was moderately successful, and was repeated. The lecturer felt that he gave sterling value for his wages, but he saw the dangers of the practice, and determined to make it only a temporary expedient.

His real life lay in the preparation of one of the most striking and impressive works which has ever appeared in England. We remember his worship of truth, and his steadfast belief in the futility of shams. He was now to support this faith by an illustration. Some fifty years before the time at which he wrote, France had become a perfect incarnation of falsehood. The king did not govern, the nobles had no duties, the army was filled with officers who could not fight, the administration with men who could not administer, the priesthood with priests who did not believe. The duty of the finance-minister was to hide the inevitable approach of the evil day under a mask of lies; on all hands was starvation, discontent, disbelief; but all that was influential in the nation combined to assume, in spite of facts, that things were going well.

Then the crash came. With one accord the starved multitudes rose and declared war on this mockery of

rule. The task of destruction was soon accomplished ; but the more difficult task of re-creation remained. The *noblesse* failed to achieve it, the *bourgeois* failed, the *sansculottes* failed. The disease of falsehood had eaten into the souls of all men ; nothing that they attempted would stand the test of facts. At last came one who refused to shut his eyes, who adhered strictly to fact, and what the whole nation had in vain tried to do, he by his single will accomplished. Fact was too strong for formulas.

On this text Carlyle preached his sermon. The *French Revolution* is generally spoken of as a history, and it undoubtedly illustrates Carlyle's very decided views on the subject of history ; but it is primarily a sermon. It presupposes in its readers a knowledge of the bare facts, just as a preacher assumes a knowledge of the Bible in his hearers. As a preparation for the examination-room the book cannot be recommended ; it was sent as a message by its author to the hearts of his countrymen, as a message to be pondered over and laid to heart, as a thing of practical importance to be understood. This seems the true light in which to look at the work. Carlyle had no expectation that it would bring him fame or reward ; he was burdened with the weight of his convictions, and could not rest till they were told. Men had not read *Sartor*,—perhaps the form had been to blame. But here they should see that in the actual matter-of-fact history, which mere text-books would verify, those principles which he had so vehemently asserted in *Sartor* did actually

govern the world. And so, in sorrow of heart and sore discouragement, with the near prospect of starvation before him, he put feature after feature, line after line, into the picture, till at last it appeared as we know it now, so vivid and powerful, so resistless in its teaching, that we almost shudder to read it. Men who can smile at the blood-and-thunder creations of Poe and Duboisgobey, who can view with perfect equanimity Irving's study of the death of the old French king, and listen unmoved to the tragedian's delineation of Eugene Aram's terrors, are held to this picture of Carlyle's by a resistless fascination, a nameless dread that the horrible thing will repeat itself some day. It is all so real; the teller of the story seems to have lived through those awful scenes, to be describing men whom his own eyes have beheld. Scarcely anything so vivid had been produced since Dante wrote his *Inferno*. "It was like a load of fire burning up my heart," said Carlyle himself of it,<sup>56</sup> and we can well understand his meaning. Robespierre, and Marat, and Carrier, and Philippe Égalité; the Noyades, the September massacres, the Bastille, —all rise before us with the reality of life. There is no straining after the horrible,—the author shows that he can see beauty as well as ugliness, for nothing is more wonderful in the book than the exquisite chapter in which Charlotte Corday appears, performs her allotted task, and vanishes again for ever. But the facts are stern, and with relentless accuracy we *see* the drama move on to its dread fulfilment.

<sup>56</sup> *Second Forty*, vol. i., p. 128.

It is pleasant, for the sake of England's credit, to be able to say that this noble challenge did not fall on utterly deaf ears. Slowly but certainly men grew to realize that here was amongst them one of a different order from themselves, one whose heart was great with inspired thoughts, whose life was devoted to a grand ideal. From the publication of the *French Revolution* may be dated the acknowledgment of Carlyle's genius. Henceforward he speaks as a power; still, it is true, misunderstood and only half-believed, but no longer passed over in silence. He had spoken of the past; he was now to apply his teaching to the present.

The Reform Bill had *not* brought the Millennium. There had been immense political activity, new institutions, and alterations in old forms; but there was no evidence of any improvement in the national *character*. Electors were as bribable as ever, speeches in Parliament and out of it just as insincere. The questions that really interested the House were questions of power and place; there seemed as little sense of responsibility as before. The effect of the change in the composition of the Lower House was to produce, as the ruler of the nation, presumably the wisest and greatest character of the day,—Lord Melbourne. Such a leader was only possible in a Parliament which had definitely taken compromise as its watchword, which was determined to shut its eyes to all graver questions, and live simply on sufferance.

But the Reform agitation had been too deep and

serious to pass entirely away without another effort. Beyond the range of the middle-class politicians, whose ideal was Lord Melbourne and Compromise, there was a band of agitators who declined to accept half-measures, and whose indignation at what they deemed a betrayal of trust was deep and sincere. The views of these men had taken shape in the famous "Charter" of 1838, and Chartism was henceforth to be reckoned with as a political and social force. Instead of seeing in it the natural outcome of existing causes, instead of recognizing the justice there was in it, and setting seriously to work to remove the causes of the agitation, the politicians of the day agreed to treat the phenomenon as trivial, even pretended to doubt its existence. Nowhere can obliquity of vision be so readily commanded as in the House of Commons. Things which are not convenient to be seen are treated, by a dexterous use of the forms of the House, as if they were not. Such was the way in which a Reformed Parliament agreed to treat Chartism. It was the old story of the ladder that had done its work.

This conduct filled Carlyle with indignation. The deepest sympathies of his nature were with the class from which the majority of the Chartists were drawn, the class from which he himself had sprung. He could see that under the somewhat pedantic exterior of Chartism there lay a real meaning, and his reading of the difficulty well illustrates his way of looking at a subject. The political philosopher of



the day, if asked to explain the meaning of Chartism, would probably have defined it as "a demand for the Charter," and, if pressed further, might have explained that "the Charter" meant universal suffrage, vote by ballot, and so on through the famous Six Points. This was not Carlyle's way of looking at the matter. Let us hear his view in his own language :—

"Chartism means the bitter discontent grown fierce and mad, the wrong condition, therefore, or the wrong disposition, of the working classes of England."<sup>57</sup>

These were plain words, and if either alternative were correct the matter was one of the gravest import, one which demanded the instant attention of those who professed to rule the nation. The action of Parliament on the question Carlyle summed up in a few caustic sentences. "Alas! the remote observer knows not the nature of Parliaments: how Parliaments, extant there for the British Nation's sake, find that they are extant withal for their own sake. . . . Hitherto, on this most national of questions, the Collective Wisdom of the Nation has availed us as good as nothing whatever."<sup>58</sup>

Then follows a remarkably acute criticism of the statistics with which the prophets of smooth things had been proving the non-existence of Chartism. It must have astonished those who knew Carlyle only as the mystic philosopher of *Sartor*, to read such cool, matter-of-fact remarks on sublunary

<sup>57</sup> *Chartism*, "Miscellanies," vol. vi., p. 110.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 112.



matters. But it is really a little surprising to hear Carlyle denounced as "unpractical" by those who profess to have read his works. When he chose to go into details, Mill himself could not be more scientific. He seems almost to have taken pains, in the earlier chapters of *Chartism*, to show that he did *not* overlook the facts which every one else saw. He gives the new Poor Law its due meed of praise, he recognizes the fact that a change in the conditions of industry is inevitably attended with much temporary suffering, he appreciates the immense possibilities of good that lie in the new discoveries in mechanics and physics. But an advocate is surely not bound to confine himself to his adversary's side of the case. And Carlyle is here acting as the advocate of the working classes. Is the practical man he who sees only his own side of the question, or he who sees both, all the sides? A manufacturers' Parliament had a clear enough appreciation of the advantages which the new state of things brought to their own class, but they showed no disposition to share these advantages with the men whom they used as their instruments to gain them. The new Poor Law was well; it abolished a frightful nuisance. But it was only negative. It prohibited idleness under penalties, but it made no effort to provide work. Change in the conditions of labour might be good, but at least it was the duty of those to whom they brought wealth to seek to minimise the sorrows of those to whom they brought suffering. No positive effort was made to improve

matters. Whether it was mere selfishness, or whether it was that they were appalled by the difficulties of the problem, the politicians of the day adopted a doctrine which seemed to Carlyle the most cowardly and futile of all doctrines which could possibly be professed by men who pretended to *govern*—the doctrine of *laissez-faire*, or the reduction of State action to a minimum, “a chief social principle which this present writer, for one, will by no manner of means believe in, but pronounce at all fit times to be false, heretical, and damnable, if ever aught was,”<sup>59</sup> He regarded it as a sheer resignation by rulers of the very task they were called on to do. If they felt their inability to govern, let them honestly resign their position. But to continue to govern in name, under cover of such a policy, was to draw the wages of an office after giving up all pretence of doing the work. A theory which assumed the capacity of every one to judge of his own interests seemed to Carlyle, emancipated as he was from formulas, to be simply a lie. What capacity could the peasant or operative, forced to work all his waking hours for a bare subsistence, be supposed to reserve for speculation upon his interests? The one “right” of such a man was to be governed wisely and faithfully, led and guided to find his true interest. “Ah, it is not joyful mirth, it is sadder than tears, the laugh Humanity is forced to, at *laissez-faire* applied to poor peasants, in a world like our Europe of the year 1839.”<sup>60</sup> Against

<sup>59</sup> *Chartism*, p. 121.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 131.

this principle Carlyle once for all hurls down a great defiance ; he is its sworn foe for the remainder of his life.

For the rest, his method is characteristic. Not in reforming of institutions lies the remedy, but in the reformation of character. The real grievance of the working classes is not even their hunger, but the feeling of injustice which the conduct of their rulers has forced upon them. All around them they see duties neglected. An aristocracy might at least realize that it had to do something besides preserve game ; a plutocracy, that its sole calling was not to live in luxury. The landowner must recognize the fact that every peasant on his land is under his care, to be helped and put in the way of work. The capitalist must be made to see that he does not fulfil his duty to his hands when he pays them their bare wages, and then turns them off to starve. By his action he has fixed their mode of life, and he is responsible for its continuance, or at least for a substitute. At any rate, Government might do two things, which on no respectable theory could be said to infringe the sacred liberty of the subject. It might educate the nation's children, and provide a scheme of emigration for those whom it did not want to keep at home.

“For all this of the ‘painless extinction,’ and the rest, is in a world where Canadian Forests stand unfelled, boundless Plains and Prairies unbroken with the plough ; on the west and on the east green desert spaces never yet made white with corn ; and to the overcrowded little western nook of Europe, our Terrestrial Planet, nine-tenths of it yet vacant or

tenanted by nomades, is still crying, Come and till me, come and reap me! And in an England, with wealth and means for moving such as no nation ever before had. With ships, with warships rotting idle, which, but bidden move and not rot, might bridge all oceans. With trained men, educated to pen and practise, to administer and act; briefless Barristers, chargeless Clergy, taskless Scholars, languishing in all court-houses, hiding in obscure garrets, besieging all antechambers, in passionate want of simply one thing, Work;—with as many Half-pay Officers of both Services, wearing themselves down in wretched tedium, as might lead an Emigrant host larger than Xerxes' was! . . . Alas! where are now the Hengsts and Alarics of our still-glowing, still-expanding Europe; who, when their home is grown too narrow, will enlist, and, like fire-pillars, guide onwards those superfluous masses of indomitable living Valour; equipped, not now with the battle-axe and war-chariot, but with the steam-engine and ploughshare? Where are they?—Preserving their game.”<sup>61</sup>

It is an awkward fact for those who treat Carlyle's teaching as unpractical that within a twelvemonth of the publication of *Chartism* two distinct efforts were made by Government to carry its recommendations into effect. At the close of the year 1839, in spite of the bitter opposition of the *laissez-faire* school, a bill was passed which provided for an increase of the education grant, upon condition of increased inspection by officials of the way in which it was administered. And in January 1840 was established the Colonial Land and Emigration Board, for the purpose of assisting the spontaneous efforts of the over-crowded centres to relieve themselves by emigration. Both these efforts were small in themselves, but they are noteworthy as among the first symptoms of an awakened sense of duty on

<sup>61</sup> *Chartism*, pp. 185, 186.



the part of the ruling classes, and as the initial steps in a line of policy which has increased in importance ever since that day. *Chartism* was bought eagerly by those whose welfare Carlyle had at heart, and doubtless helped powerfully to turn the tide against philosophic Radicalism. The seed had been sown, but the harvest was not yet.

More and more the optimism of the *Edinburgh Review* seemed at fault. The Repeal agitation in Ireland was assuming a terrible aspect, intensified by the economic difficulties of the country. The distress was spreading to England, and in the northern towns thousands of half-starved operatives clamoured for work. The remedy proposed was free trade, and there was no lack of sympathy in Carlyle for the heroic labours of Cobden and his associates. He could not speak of the Corn Laws without a scornful indignation which would have made him a priceless acquisition to the army of the League. But he saw that the Corn Laws were surely doomed, and did not care to waste his strength in slaying the slain. And he saw too, though Cobden and his friends did not, that Free-trade alone could not save England. It is not without a first feeling of surprise that we read the glowing anticipations of universal happiness in which the advocates of the League at this time indulged. Yet we ought, perhaps, hardly to wonder. The Free-traders were men of intelligence and boundless energy, but their whole lives were for the time wrapped up in their immediate work, and they

had no eyes for anything beyond. Carlyle was of a different order. He saw that the repeal of the Corn Laws would have only a negative effect; it would remove an absurd stumbling-block, but it would not take the blind man by the hand and lead him into the path of safety. It was only *laissez-faire* after all, and against *laissez-faire* Carlyle had, as we know, declared war. His eye was fascinated by the huge masses of unorganized labour scattered up and down in the land. His wide knowledge of history convinced him that if this raw material was to develop into really permanent prosperity, there must be some attempt to organize it. Industrial England of 1840 was not an organism which had become able, by inherited instinct, to develop and manage itself; it was essentially a new and untried thing, working under new conditions. As well expect a child to feed and educate itself, as a mass of toiling mill-hands to rise to real intelligence and consistency without help. Here, put in a form which appears so often in Carlyle's works, is the problem which seems so difficult to answer in any way but his:—

“Why, the four-footed worker has already *got* all that this two-handed one is clamouring for! How often must I remind you? There is not a horse in England, able and willing to work, but *has* due food and lodging, and goes about sleek-coated, satisfied in heart. And you say, It is impossible. Brothers, I answer, if for you it be impossible, what is to become of you? It is impossible for us to believe it to be impossible. The human brain, looking at those sleek English horses, refuses to believe in such impossibility for English men.”<sup>62</sup>

In saying that Carlyle was concerned not so much

<sup>62</sup> *Past and Present*, p. 19.



with phenomena as with the causes of phenomena, we ought to make one striking exception. There was one phenomenon which seemed to him to transcend in vital importance all other facts. This was the appearance of a great man. The tendency of science is to lay stress on events rather than men, to minimize the agent that the process may be exalted. In his lectures on *Heroes*, delivered in 1840, Carlyle laid down a defiantly opposite theory of the universe. The secret of the world's history for him lay in its great men. They were the causes, not the effects, of movements and tendencies. He accepted them as great ultimate facts of history, not as incidents to be accounted for. This view becomes henceforward another cardinal article of his creed, and we see it insisted on in the work to which we must now look.

Carlyle's message to the world of industrial distress is contained in the book known as *Past and Present*, published at the beginning of the year 1843.

A few masterly touches at the beginning show us how clearly he appreciated the really pressing anomalies of the times.

"England is full of wealth, of multifarious produce, supply for human want in every kind; yet England is dying of inanition. With unabated bounty the land of England blooms and grows; waving with yellow harvests; thick-studded with workshops, industrial implements, with fifteen millions of workers, understood to be the strongest, the cunningest, and the willingest our Earth ever had; these men are here; the work they have done, the fruit they have realized, is here,

abundant, exuberant on every hand of us ; and behold, some baleful fiat as of Enchantment has gone forth, saying, Touch it not, ye workers, ye master-workers, ye master-idlers ; none of you can touch it, no man of you shall be the better for it ; this is enchanted fruit.”<sup>63</sup>

Might it not be that the answer to the problem was simpler than men thought, that they had overlooked it because it was so simple ? Such things had happened. Men had been trying all sorts of external remedies for the diseases of society ; it did not occur to them to think that the quality of the men they set to guide it might have something to do with the matter. It is always so much more pleasant to criticise schemes than men, others than ourselves. So long as men persisted in assuming that the course they were on was necessarily the right one, they would hardly be likely to find a solution which lay in another direction. There was endless experimenting upon institutions and political machinery. What if men were to look a little at results, in the character of themselves and their rulers ?

Here Carlyle breaks off abruptly to draw a most striking and suggestive picture of a long-forgotten state of society, a glimpse into which had just been afforded him by the publication of the Camden Society's edition of Jocelyn de Brakelond's Chronicle. Jocelyn tells an artless but vivid tale of a great English monastery in the twelfth century. The monastery, an isolated unit, under its own laws and rulers, formed no unlikely miniature of a greater

<sup>63</sup> *Past and Present*, p. I.

kingdom. Carlyle found in Jocelyn's history, written without theory or other purpose than as a record of fact, the account of two rulers of this little territory. The one had been idle and worthless, content to let things go their own way, practising an unconscious *laissez-faire*; with the result that his abbey went fast along the road to ruin. The other had been a wise and resolute man, who put his own comfort out of sight, and made his duty his first thought. His duty was to govern, not to enjoy himself; and he did it. Under him the little kingdom had flourished; abuses had been corrected, old-standing evils remedied, and a picture of industry and genuineness substituted for the old caricature of idleness and falsehood.

*Ars est celare artem.* There is hardly a note or comment all through this part of the book. With exquisite skill the old past is made to live before us; the uneventful life of a quiet corner of bygone England unfolds itself calmly and clearly. The artist seems to have no other object than to make us see with our own eyes what is actually going on. Yet we feel clearly that all this has an application to the present. The deep laws of life are the same for us as for Abbot Samson and his monks in the Abbey of St. Edmund. Our circumstances have altered strangely, but in ourselves we are the same. There is a new door, but it is the old lock. A silent sermon, yet for all seeing creatures most eloquent, is this wonderful piece of historical art.

But, unfortunately, there are people, a great many

people, who are not seeing creatures. So in the third division of his work Carlyle turns again to present conditions, and reads off one by one the features of the time. First he notices the universal toleration with which shams are regarded. Nothing is what it seems to be; the duty of the workman is not to *do* genuine work, but to persuade people that he has done it.

"The very Paper I now write on is made, it seems, partly of plaster-line well-smoothed, and obstructs my writing! You are lucky if you can find any good Paper,—any work really *done*; search where you will, from highest Phantasm apex to lowest Enchanted basis."<sup>64</sup>

This accusation has been signally seconded by subsequent events. In 1843 English manufactures were in request all over Europe as the most genuine in the market. Now the world has found out that they cannot be relied on, and Carlyle's words read like a prophecy in the vulgar sense of the term.

"No one man can depart from the truth without damage to himself; no one million of men; no Twenty-seven Millions of men. . . . 'Rhetoric all this?' No, my brother, very singular to say, it is Fact all this. Cocker's Arithmetic is not truer. Forgotten in these days, it is old as the foundations of the Universe, and will endure until the Universe cease. It is forgotten now; and the first mention of it puckers thy sweet countenance into a sneer: but it will be brought to mind again,—unless indeed the Law of Gravitation chance to cease, and men find that they *can* walk on vacancy."<sup>65</sup>

Amid all these shams it was a comfort to find something in which men really did believe, were it

<sup>64</sup> *Past and Present*, p. 121.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 123.

ever so unworthy of honour. This one fact Carlyle found in the worship of wealth. "Thank Heaven that there is even a Mammonism, *anything* we are in earnest about."<sup>63</sup> Dilettanteism, which divided the upper world with Mammonism, was far more horrible, for its very essence was a denial of everything. The adaptation of the Koran story of the Dead Sea Apes to the polite of the day was not perhaps calculated to conciliate their attention; but Carlyle was too much in earnest to think of conciliation. *Ernst ist das Leben* is the motto of *Past and Present*. Again and again he returns to the charge. *Is there nothing better to be done than to earn money? Is that man fulfilling his destiny who draws a hundred thousand a year from a country in which he does no stroke of work? Has an employer of labour no other concern with the souls and bodies of his labourers than to pay them their wages? Is it the duty of governors merely to let things alone? Is there nothing wrong when in one street thousands of shirts lie rotting for want of wearers, and in the next lie thousands of naked men waiting to be clothed? Is the pursuit of happiness really the highest vocation to which man can be called? Oh for one of the old heroes to show a degenerate world what could be done by real self-sacrifice! "My brother, the brave man has to give his life away."*<sup>67</sup> It is not till a man realizes this truth that the possibility of greatness dawns upon him. Let him leave

<sup>66</sup> *Past and Present*, p. 126.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 175.



thinking of his prospects and turn simply to his duty.

“‘But my future fate?’ Yes, thy future fate, indeed! Thy future fate, while thou makest *it* the chief question, seems to me—extremely questionable. . . . Work is Worship . . . yes. . . . *Its* cathedral the Dome of Immensity,—hast thou seen it? coped with the star-galaxies; paved with the green mosaic of land and ocean; and for altar verily the star-throne of the Eternal! Its litany and psalmody the noble acts, the heroic work and suffering, and true heart-utterance of all the Valiant of the Sons of Men. Its choir-music the ancient Winds and Oceans, and deep-toned, inarticulate, but most speaking voices of Destiny and History,—supernal ever as of old. Between two great Silences:

‘Stars silent rest o’er us,  
Graves under us silent!’

Between which two great Silences, do not, as we said, all human Noises, in the naturest tunes, most *preternaturally* march and roll?”<sup>68</sup>

By the side of this splendid piece of exalted eloquence we may place a fragment of prophecy as cool and acute as ever man of business framed. The contrast will give us perhaps the best idea we can spare time to get of the range and depth of *Past and Present*, and the horoscope cast by the later extract may be interesting to readers of the present day.

“Yes, were the Corn Laws ended to-morrow, there is nothing yet ended; there is only room made for all manner of things beginning. The Corn Laws gone, and Trade made free, it is as good as certain this paralysis of industry will pass away. We shall have another period of commercial enterprise, of victory and prosperity; during which, it is likely, much money will again be made, and all the people may, by the extant methods, still for a space of years be kept alive and physically fed. The strangling band of famine will be loosened from our necks; we shall have room again to breathe;

<sup>68</sup> *Past and Present*, p. 200.



time to bethink ourselves, to repent and consider. A precious and thrice-precious space of years; wherein to struggle as for life in reforming our foul ways; in alleviating, instructing, regulating our people; seeking, as for life, that something like spiritual food be imparted them, some real governance and guidance provided them! It will be a priceless time. For our new period or paroxysm of commercial prosperity will and can, on the old methods of 'Competition and Devil take the hindmost,' prove but a paroxysm; a new paroxysm—likely enough, if we do not use it better, to be our last."<sup>69</sup>

The reader of the year 1888 is invited to reflect upon this passage.

"Yes, but Liberty, Liberty," exclaims the politician; "what right has anyone to guide another?" To whom Carlyle's reply is stern enough:—

"Despotism is essential in most enterprises; I am told, they do not tolerate 'freedom of debate' on board a Seventy-Four! Republican senate and *plebiscita* would not answer well in Cotton Mills. And yet observe there too: Freedom, not nomad's or ape's Freedom, but man's Freedom; this is indispensable. We must have it, and will have it! To reconcile Despotism with Freedom: well, is that such a mystery? Do you not already know the way? It is to make your Despotism *just*. Rigorous as Destiny; but just too, as Destiny and its Laws. The Laws of God: all men obey these, have no 'Freedom' at all but in obeying them. The way is already known, part of the way; and courage and some qualities are needed for walking on it!"<sup>70</sup>

For some time, to Carlyle at least, the horizon seemed to be brighter after this storm. It is not a small testimony to the worth of Peel's character, that two such men as Carlyle and Cobden, so different in powers and mental attitude, yet both so strikingly free from prejudice and conventionality, should have

<sup>69</sup> *Past and Present*, p. 159.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 241.

singled him out as the only possible hope of the English nation. Cobden's admiration led him to prefer the old-fashioned Tory to the leaders of his own party. Carlyle saw, in the man who had dared to face a storm of reproach and calumny, a statesman of a higher order than the Palmerstons and the Russells. Peel had started boldly on the path of free-trade in spite of the most ominous signs of disapproval from his followers. He had ultimately repealed the Corn Laws. He had dealt boldly and effectively with O'Connell's attempt at rebellion. He had placed the finances of the national bank on a firm footing. He had made provision for Irish education in the teeth of sectarian bigotry.

But in a constitutional country a minister must do more than govern wisely. He must keep his party well in hand, by cajolment or bribery of some kind. Chatham had despised the humbler arts of "management," but even Chatham had fallen. It was the same with Peel. He demanded fresh powers to meet the Irish difficulty, and his false friends saw their chance. They united with his avowed enemies to drag him from office, and to seat a government which had promptly to make the same demand for which Peel had been ejected. Again Peel stood out nobly, and begged the House, if it felt any remorse for its conduct, to show it by strengthening the hands of the existing government. With such a statesman to fall back on, there was still hope; but meanwhile he was out of office, and things again went awry.

For the Irish Famine of 1846 no Government was directly responsible, although the severity of its results was largely due to the thoroughly vicious system of land-tenure which had been allowed to grow up in the country. But it soon became apparent that political disaffection was mingled with genuine distress, encouraged to activity by the fate of Peel's attempt at firm government. The Ministry had to ask for a Coercion Act, for a Treason Felony Act. The conviction of Mitchel was followed by the abortive insurrection of Smith O'Brien and the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act. Things were no better in England. The monster Chartist meeting was fixed for April 1848, and though, thanks to the admirable preparations made to meet it, the plan failed of its immediate object, there was sufficient energy to show that the life of Chartism was by no means extinct. The country gentlemen were taunting the manufacturers with the condition of their operatives, and the manufacturers thought that they repelled the charge if they pointed to similar features in the lot of the agricultural labourer. Palmerston was bent on embarking the nation in a war for the sake of an enterprising foreigner who wished to make a thousand pounds by brandishing the terrors of English protection. Abroad, things were in the wildest confusion. In France the abdication of Louis Philippe had been followed by an attack of Bonapartism which threatened to produce endless complications. In Austria, Italy, Spain, Poland, and Hungary, thrones

were rocking in the storm of revolution. Even to Prussia, the one country in Europe in which the art of government appeared to be understood, the movement had spread. Berlin had been declared in a state of siege. Everywhere was uncertainty and agitation.

Carlyle could not see this unmoved. It seemed to him that the day of judgment for the sins of the world was about to arrive, and he determined to make one heroic effort to avert the catastrophe. The *Latter Day Pamphlets* were the desperate effort of a man who *saw*, to persuade others of what was actually passing before them.

It is hard for us, who live in the days which Carlyle's teaching had helped to mould, to realize the audacity of the *Latter Day Pamphlets*. But no magazine, great as was Carlyle's name by that time, would allow them to appear in its pages; they were published simply as political tracts. It was seriously supposed by a section of the reading public that their author had gone mad or taken to drink. For the moment no one dreamed of attempting to act upon their teaching. It may be worth while to see what were the outrages perpetrated by the offending work.

The remedy for the universal wreck of old systems was everywhere announced to be Democracy, that is to say, the government of all by all, or, as Carlyle preferred to put it, no government at all. Government, by the nature of the case, supposes a ruler and a ruled; if all men were to be rulers there could be none left to be ruled. Democracy, in its purest form, was evidently impossible.

But this was practically admitted, and all the nations of the earth were clamouring for constitutions, that is to say, were asking to be governed by paper rather than by men. Everything was to go by vote; it was assumed that voting would settle everything. The engine which was to reform Europe had been tried for nearly two hundred years in England, and it was just becoming clear that it was a failure. All the arguments from ancient democracies were foolish, for the conditions were wholly different. So it was too with the one example of even a moderately successful modern democracy—America.

“Cotton crops and Indian corn and dollars come to light, and half a world of untilled land, where populations that respect the constable can live, for the present *without* Government: this comes to light; and the profound sorrow of all nobler hearts, here uttering itself in silent, patient, unspeakable ennui, there coming out as vague elegiac wailings, that there is still next to nothing more. ‘Anarchy *plus* a street-constable,’ that also is anarchic to me, and other than quite lovely.”<sup>71</sup>

For the fatal, to Carlyle the blasphemous, tendency of Democracies was to set up sham-governors, men whom the world would not trust with the care of any enterprise which it really valued, but whom it complacently accepted as rulers because they were colourless and inoffensive.

“Alas, there lies the origin, the fatal necessity, of modern Democracy everywhere. It is the Noblest, not the Sham-Noblest; it is God-Almighty’s Noble, not the Court-Tailor’s Noble, nor the Able-Editor’s Noble, that must in some approxi-

<sup>71</sup> *Latter Day Pamphlets*, p. 17.



mate degree be raised to the supreme place; he and not a counterfeit,—under penalties! Penalties deep as death, and at length terrible as hell-on-earth, my constitutional friend.”<sup>72</sup>

But a deeper meaning lay under these symptoms. Men were trying to dispense, not only with government, but with all other human relations. The world presented itself to Carlyle much as it did to Burke, as a thing of infinitely complex construction, every fibre of it united with every other fibre, every part dependent on every other for mutual assistance and support.

“I say, there is not a Red Indian, hunting by Lake Winnipic, can quarrel with his squaw, but the whole world must smart for it: will not the price of beaver rise? It is a mathematical fact that the casting of this pebble from my hand alters the centre of gravity of the Universe.”<sup>73</sup>

And it was supposed that all this complex mass of relationships and duties could be held together by the “sole nexus of cash-payment,” that the duties of every man to the world could be adjusted and settled by the periodical payment of certain sums of money. Certainly there were signs that the old framework was breaking up. Freedom of divorce was beginning to be talked of, servants no longer considered themselves members of their master’s family, but simply as labour-merchants performing certain bargains; in a word, the tendency of things was towards anarchy. This Carlyle saw, long before Mr. Matthew Arnold’s famous book was written. Thirty thousand needlewomen, the newspapers said,

<sup>72</sup> *Latter Day Pamphlets*, p. 19.

<sup>73</sup> *Sartor Resartus*, p. 70.



were starving upon agony wages in London alone, and yet on all hands was the cry that decent sempstresses could not be had for any money. Three million paupers were "rotting in forced idleness," and yet everywhere work was waiting to be done. The boast of liberty in such circumstances seemed to Carlyle to be mockery.

"When shall we have done with all this of British Liberty, Voluntary Principle, Dangers of Centralisation, and the like? It is really getting too bad. For British Liberty, it seems, the people cannot be taught to read, British Liberty, shuddering to interfere with the rights of capital, takes six or eight millions of money annually to feed the idle labourer whom it dare not employ. For British Liberty we live over poisonous cesspools, gully-drains, and detestable abominations; and impotent London cannot sweep the dirt out of itself. British Liberty produces—what? Floods of Hansard Debates every year, and apparently little else at present. If these are the results of British Liberty, I for ore move we should lay it on the shelf a little, and look out for something other and farther."<sup>74</sup>

The thing was not to boast of political names, but to find real governors.

Carlyle's next attack was perhaps the boldest he ever made, and to superficial thinkers it still seems the most questionable. The Abolitionist agitation had started an idea in the minds of the proverbially obtuse English nation, and, as usual, they ran it to death. "A blind, loquacious pruriency of indiscriminate Philanthropism, substituting itself, with much self-laudation, for the silent, divinely-awful sense of right and wrong."<sup>75</sup> A most flagrant instance of this

<sup>74</sup> *Latter Day Pamphlets*, p. 25.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

tendency had just come under Carlyle's notice. He had visited Millbank prison, and had seen scoundrels of the profoundest kind placed in a condition which he, simple as were his tastes and small his wants, felt inclined to envy. No one who knows anything of Carlyle will accuse him of hard-heartedness; he was compassionate to an almost blamable extent. But the sense of justice was strong in him, and it roused his indignation to think that hard-working, innocent men and women should be taxed almost of necessities to keep such scoundrels in comfort. And he saw under the philanthropic movement a conscience-stricken acknowledgment of injustice. Men felt that the misery and the crime were partly their own fault; and it was easier to soften the criminal's lot than to remove the causes which led him into crime.

But this seems to be only a digression. Carlyle has started with a fierce attack on the existing theories of government; he turns now to their practical results. The machinery of the State departments was ill calculated to stand the fire of such a weapon as Carlyle's criticism. Those were the days when appointments went openly by what was euphoniously termed "interest;" in other words, by jobbery. The question was not the merits of the candidate, but the claims of his supporters. The inquiry of 1855 had not revealed the depths of the abuses, but there was a general assumption that the Civil Service was not a thing that could be boasted about. In this attack, as well as that on the philanthropic movement, we get a decided confirmation of Carlyle's diagnosis from

a man who had not indeed Carlyle's genius and insight, but who had the gift of seeing things which were plainly before him. The novels of Charles Dickens show that, even to one whose whole nature led him to take an optimistic view of social arrangements, these things appeared to be too bad.

To Carlyle the inefficiency of the governing machine seemed far more important than the decay of the consultative organ. Two things he found fundamentally wrong in Government offices. The work was ill done, and it was the wrong kind of work. Serious charges these, which, however, no one of the day seemed inclined to dispute. Even grave official personages declared the departments to be almost past reform. Carlyle's suggestion went as usual to the heart of the matter. No good work could be expected so long as no pains were taken to select good workmen. An incompetent workman could not produce satisfactory work merely because he was put into a Government office. You cannot make rules of thumb for the discovery of the best men ; but at least you can remove obstacles from the way of attaining them. For instance, the maxim which requires the responsible head of a department to be elected to Parliament as a preliminary to appointment, is simply a premium upon anarchy and ineptitude, for an office held on such a tenure can never command the confidence of subordinates, nor are the qualifications needed for a successful fight at the hustings the least guarantee of administrative talent.

And if, by Heaven's blessing, says Carlyle, you do get some able men, there is work enough for them to do. Foreign affairs are very much better left alone; they amount generally to mere itching. But in the Home Office, and the Colonial Office! There are idle soldiers to be made to earn their pay, convicts to be turned into useful pioneers of labour in distant lands, a people to be educated in the elements of knowledge, colonies to be organized, paupers to be set to work. If men would only realize that these things have to be *done*, not left alone, half the battle would be over.

The next subject of attack is one which every thinking politician, from Aristotle downwards, has recognized as the special evil of popular governments, but which is perhaps the most difficult of all political evils to cure. It is hard to forbid a man to recommend himself by every artifice in his power, more especially if he speak, not evil, but good, of the powers that be. Yet it is a demonstrable fact that the institution known as "stump-oratory" is fatal to the character of governments created by its means. The stump-orator speaks what he thinks will please his audience, not what he believes to be true. He promises anything that sounds most attractive. It is his only chance of success. He is elected to Parliament, to office. Here he must do, not what he believes to be best, but what he has promised.

The malady had spread to other organs. In all the professions, Church, law, and medicine, the successful man was the man who could talk, not the

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man who could act or think. Even in literature, whose action may be defined to be thought, there was the same worship of mere words.

From the stump-orator the prophet passes naturally to Parliament, the goal of the stump-orator's ambition. Perhaps nowhere, in the whole of his critical writings, does Carlyle show a more masterly appreciation of realities than in his estimate of the past and present meaning of Parliament. After an historical analysis of the rise and development of the institution with which Professor Stubbs himself could hardly find fault, he proceeds to point out how the real function of Parliament has passed into other hands.

"In countries that can stand a Free Press,—which many cannot, but which England, thanks to her long, good training, still can,—it is evident the National Consult or *real* Parliamentary Debate goes on of itself, everywhere, continually. Is not the *Times* newspaper an open Forum, open as Forum never was before, where all mortals vent their opinion, state their grievance;—all manner of grievances, from loss of your umbrella in a railway, to loss of your honour and fortune by unjust sovereign persons? One grand branch of the Parliament's trade is evidently dead for ever! And the beautiful Elective Parliament itself is nothing like so living as it used to be. If we will consider it, the essential truth of the matter is, every British man can now elect *himself* to Parliament without consulting the hustings at all. If there be any vote, idea, or notion in him, on any earthly or heavenly thing, can he not take a pen, and therewith autocratically pour forth the same into the ears and hearts of all the people, so far as it will go? Precisely so far, and, what is a great advantage too, no farther. The discussion of questions goes on, not in St. Stephen's now, but from Dan to Beersheba, by able-editors and articulate-speaking creatures that *can* get others to listen to them. This is the fact, and it demands to be attended to as such,—and will produce changes, I think, by-and-by.

"What is the good of men collected, with effort, to debate



on the benches of St. Stephen's, now when there is a *Times* newspaper? Not the discussion of questions, only the ultimate voting of them (a very brief process, I should think!) requires to go on, or can veritably go on, in St. Stephen's now. The honourable gentleman is oftenest very wearisome in St. Stephen's now; his and his constituency's *aye* or *no* is all we want of the honourable gentleman there; all we are ever like to get of him there,—could it but be had without admixtures! If your Lordship will reflect on it, you will find it an obsolete function, this debating one of his; useless in these new times, as a set of riding post-boys would be along the line of the Great Western Railway.”<sup>76</sup>

But Parliament, having lost its true function of safety-valve, had taken to a function for which it was wholly unfitted, the task of government. Never was a more impossible attempt. In the whole course of history only two parliaments had succeeded in governing—the Long Parliament of the Civil War, and the French Convention. And these succeeded by virtue of the fact that each had in ultimate reserve a power which was in the highest degree “unconstitutional” and unparliamentary—Cromwell, and the guillotine. The force of this criticism we shall have occasion to notice further on.

But it is in the last of the terrible *Pamphlets* that Carlyle reaches the full height of his power. Always when he is dealing with institutions he betrays an impatient sense of the unimportance of the subject; it is only when he is speaking of character that his inspiration is supreme. Under the title of *Jesuitism* he sweeps together all the falseness and baseness which he sees in the world around him, and

<sup>76</sup> *Latter Day Pamphlets*, pp. 188, 189.



sears it with the lightning of his wrath. In his enthusiasm for genuineness, Carlyle had once humorously expressed his admiration of a thoroughgoing lie.

"Glorious, heroic, fruitful for his own Time, and for all Time and all Eternity, is the constant Speaker and Doer of Truth! If no such again, in the present generation, is to be vouchsafed us, let us have at least the melancholy pleasure of beholding a decided liar."<sup>77</sup>

But with *cant*, the falsehood which half deceived itself as well as others, Carlyle waged relentless war. Everywhere he saw it, in the determination of men to build not on actual visible truth, but on conventions and shams. And most loathsome of all was the fact that this worship of cant so often came from the lips of those who made a fair show in the flesh.

"'Be careful how you believe truth,' cries the good man everywhere; 'composure and a whole skin are very valuable. Truth—who knows?—many things are not true; most things are uncertainties, very prosperous things are even open falsities that have been agreed upon. There is little certain truth going. If it isn't orthodox truth, it will play the very devil with you.'"<sup>78</sup>

Those who think Carlyle's indignation excessive can hardly have reflected how deeply cant really goes into our nature. Not to speak of religion, which is saturated with it, there is hardly any province of human affairs in which it is not predominant. In the very clothes we wear, we consult not our own convictions of what is best, but our anticipations of what our neighbours will consider most

<sup>77</sup> *Count Cagliostro*, "Miscellanies," vol. v., p. 68.

<sup>78</sup> *Latter Day Pamphlets*, p. 264.

fitting. In our food we are often ashamed to avow preferences which may seem to argue discredit. The man whose income is £500 a year thinks it his duty to "keep up a position" warranted only by an income of twice that amount. We even engage in "amusements" for which we have not the slightest relish, because it is *comme il faut* to pretend to like them. The most utterly unmusical family must keep a piano in its drawing-room, and profess to admire Beethoven; the most illiterate millionaire must have his "study." And this is the practice of people who profess on Sunday to believe that "all liars shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone."

Against this wide-spreading falsehood Carlyle lifts his voice in one passionate appeal, passing from fierce indignation to pathetic reproach, which, as it is almost his last direct utterance on the subjects that lay nearest his heart, I shall venture to give entire. It is long to write, but so splendid an example of the prophet's powers and teaching will bear repetition.

"How can you believe in a Heaven—the like of you? What struggle in your mean existence ever pointed thitherward? None. The first heroic soul sent down into this world, he, looking up into the sea of stars, around into the moaning forests and big oceans, into life and death, love and hate, and joy and sorrow, and the illimitable loud-thundering loom of Time,—was struck dumb by it (as the thought of every earnest soul still is); and fell on his face, and with his heart cried for salvation in the world-whirlpool: to him the 'open secret of the Universe' was no longer quite a secret, but he had caught a glimpse of it,—much hidden from the like of us in these times: 'Do nobly, thou shalt resemble the Maker of all this; do ignobly, the Enemy of the Maker.' This is the 'divine sense of Right and Wrong in man'; true reading of his position in this Universe for evermore; the indisputable God's

message still legible in every created heart,—though speedily erased and painted over, under ‘articles,’ and cantos, and empty ceremonials, in so many hearts; making the ‘open secret’ a very shut one indeed!—

“My friends, across these murky floods of twaddle and philanthropism, in spite of sad decadent ‘world trees,’ with their rookeries of foul creatures,—the silent stars, and all the eternal luminaries of the world, shine even now to him that has an eye. In this day as in all days, around and in every man, are voices from the gods, imperative to all, if obeyed by even none, which say audibly, ‘Arise, thou son of Adam, son of Time; make this thing more divine, and that thing,—and thyself, of all things; and work, and sleep not; for the Night cometh, wherein no man can work.’ He that has an ear may still hear.

“Surely, surely this ignoble sluggishness, sceptical torpor, indifference to all that does not bear on Mammon and his interests, is not the natural state of human creatures; and is not doomed to be their final one! Other states once were, or there had never been a Society, or any noble thing, among us at all. Under this brutal stagnancy there lies painfully imprisoned some tendency which could become heroic.

“The restless gnawing ennui which, like a dark dim ocean-flood, communicating with the Phlegethons and Stygian deeps, begirdles every human life so guided—is it not the painful cry even of that imprisoned heroism? Imprisoned it will never rest; set forth at present, on these sad terms, it cannot be. You unfortunates, what is the use of your money-bags, of your territories, funded properties, your mountains of possessions, equipments and mechanic inventions, which the flunkey pauses over, awestruck, and almost rises into epos and prophecy at the sight of? No use, or less than none. Your skin is covered, and your digestive and other bodily apparatus is supplied; and you have but to wish in these respects, and more is ready; and—the Devils, I think, are quizzing you. You ask for ‘happiness,’ ‘O give me happiness!’—and they hand you ever new varieties of covering for the skin, ever new kinds of supply for the digestive apparatus, new and ever new, worse or not a whit better than the old; and—and—this is your happiness? As if you were sick children; as if you were not men, but a kind of apes!

“I rather say, be thankful for your ennui; it is your last mark of manhood; this at least is a perpetual admonition and true sermon preached to you. From the chair of verity this,

whatever chairs be chairs of *canfity*. Happiness is *not* come, nor like to come; ennui, with its great waste ocean-voice, moans answer, Never, never. That ocean-voice, I tell you, is a great fact; it comes from Phlegethon and the gates of the Abyss; its bodeful never-resting inexorable moan is the voice of primeval Fate, and of the eternal necessity of things. Will you shake away your nightmare and arise; or must you lie writhing under it, till death relieve you? Unfortunate creatures! You are fed, clothed, lodged as men never were before; every day in new variety of magnificence are you equipped and attended to; such wealth of material means as is now yours was never dreamed of by man before:—and to do any noble thing, with all this mountain of implements, is for ever denied you. Only ignoble, expensive, and unfruitful things can you now do; nobleness has vanished from the sphere where you live. The way of it is lost, lost; the possibility of it has become incredible. We must try to do without it, I am told.—Well, rejoice in your upholsteries and cookeries, then, if so be they will make you ‘happy.’ Let the varieties of them be continual and innumerable. In all things let perpetual change, if that is a perpetual blessing to you, be your portion instead of mine; incur that Prophet’s curse, and in all things in this sublunary world ‘make yourselves like unto a wheel.’ Mount into your railways; whirl from place to place, at the rate of fifty, or if you like of five hundred miles an hour: you cannot escape from that inexorable all-encircling ocean-moan of ennui. No: if you would mount to the stars, and do yacht-voyages under the belts of Jupiter, or stalk deer on the ring of Saturn, it would still begirdle you. You cannot escape from it, you can but change your place in it, without solacement except one moment’s. That prophetic Sermon from the Deeps will continue with you till you wisely interpret it and do it, or else till the crack of Doom swallow it and you. *Adieu: Au revoir.*”<sup>79</sup>

In this whirlwind of rebuke and exhortation the prophet vanishes, and leaves us only the man for future study. His greatest work was now over, and it remained only for him to live out his days in the calm discharge of humbler duties. His next production was a strange contrast to the fire and

<sup>79</sup> *Latter Day Pamphlets*, pp. 284—286.

fury of the *Pamphlets*—the loving, tender biography of his dead friend, John Sterling. In the exquisite pages which close what is perhaps the most perfect memorial of friendship to be found in English literature, Carlyle almost seems to be bidding farewell to a world in which he has laboured so faithfully. But there was work for him to do yet. For thirteen years he toiled patiently, earnestly, at a task, the completion of which was to raise him to the unquestioned sovereignty of the intellectual world of his day. Many a man might be proud of *Friedrich* as the sole accomplishment of a lifetime; to Carlyle it was a task performed in the evening of life, when rest had been fairly earned, and none could have cast the stone of reproach had it been fully enjoyed. As a history, *Friedrich of Prussia* falls to be touched on elsewhere; we are here only concerned to point out how the same moral strength which had made its author's character a power among men, shines everywhere through its pages. There is the same patient seeking after truth, the same fiery scorn of work neglected or half-done, the same indignation at all baseness and stupidity, the same unwearied sense of justice, the same firm faith in the ultimate triumph of right. The fascination which carries the reader without faltering through the ten volumes of *Friedrich* is not by any means solely due to the skill with which the subject is handled. Behind the work we see the workman, earnest, fateful, presiding like a destiny over the creation of his hands, and we acknowledge the presence



of a master. The confidence which he inspires is irresistible, we never think of questioning his conclusions. It does not surprise us to hear that even in Germany at this hour Carlyle's book is made the groundwork of the highest teaching on the period of which he wrote. In the best qualities of German authors Carlyle shows himself equal to them, and he has a power which few of them possess.

Shortly after the publication of the last volumes of *Friedrich* there happened an event which cannot but be regarded as the climax of Carlyle's life. In the days of his poverty he had lived, almost unknown, in Edinburgh, the chief city of his native land. From a struggling student he had risen, by the sheer force of his own personality, to be the acknowledged head of English literature, perhaps the truly greatest power in England. Though he had received little recognition from the land of his birth, his heart was with her still. He was not the man to forget his early struggles, or the scenes in which they had been passed.

And now he was to return in honour to speak, out of the treasures of his wisdom, words of counsel to those who were entering, even as he had done fifty years before, upon the struggle of life. It would require his own pen to paint that scene when he, aged and grey, but unconquered still, stood before the young warriors who were gathering to his banner. We know how strangely in those days the world was drawn to the spot. Men of letters, men of science, politicians, gentle and



simple, travelled hundreds of miles in cold April weather to hear an old man speak for an hour to a band of college students. It was felt by the world that here was one whose speech was not mere words, but something far deeper and more precious. It was the man himself, and not his tongue, that told the story. Worn with the weight of seventy years, spent by the tempests of thought which had raged over his soul, almost crushed by the intensity of convictions which would give him no rest till he had spoken them abroad, with the shadow of a great unknown sorrow waiting just before his feet, the man, as we see him there, is the most eloquent of living sermons. The words which he spoke, read in the dry light of posterity, seem nothing very wonderful. He had nothing to add to his former teaching. It may even be said that many men could proclaim the value of diligence, honesty, reverence, zeal for truth, frugality, hope. True, many men can proclaim this by word of mouth. But how many men can live it from day to day, from hour to hour, through a life of seventy years? *That* was the real meaning of the man who stood in the Edinburgh Hall. And old and young felt that such was his meaning, and rose up to do him honour. One who has been brought before a crowd of young faces, and thought for a moment of the awful possibilities of good and evil which lie behind those eager eyes, can realize something of the feelings which must have rushed over Carlyle's mind as he stood there. One who has contrasted Carlyle's life and work with the lives

and doings of the multitudes who lived around him can guess something of the thoughts which must have been in the minds of those who heard him.

The next news was that Mrs. Carlyle was dead. Carlyle had left her in perfect confidence of coming back in a few days to tell her how he had fared. Immediately after his speech he had written a word of love, and again in his short visit to the home of his youth, begging for an answer. The answer was the silence of death.

For a man who did not love his wife he was strangely overcome. Never, through all his trials, had his spirit utterly broken down, but this was a crushing blow. Henceforward his concern with the world was that of a man who was leaving it, and wished to set his house in order. The end was not yet; for fifteen years he lingered, and one may almost hope that these long days of waiting were happier, after the first shock was over, than his former life had been. The portrait of this time shows the defiant features of earlier days softened into an expression of musing tenderness. There was no dimming of the clear brain, bodily health was still granted. In his seventy-sixth year Carlyle uttered a word, calm, unanswerable, which changed the opinion of England on the great struggle between France and Germany. Four years later he wove a series of beautiful stories out of the old lore of Norway. But these seemed only to fill up the time; calmly, almost longingly, he waited the end. Honours rained in upon him, and these, so far as

they were proofs of men's love, he valued, but for their own sake they were nothing. Some he would not accept; he had not looked for reward other than the approval of his conscience. So at length, in the silver crown of his years, he passed gently away, and slept with his fathers in the land which had given him birth. He had earned his rest.

## V.

One brief glance we must take, by way of summary, at the figure with which we have journeyed so long, and from which we are now to part.

Grandeur must, I think, be the first thought that strikes us as we look at Carlyle. Among the crowd of his contemporaries, the Hallams, De Quinceys, Macaulays, Broughams, Grotes, Bulwers, he towers like a giant. Coleridge, Wordsworth, Byron, Shelley, Keats, were all before his day; they do not dispute the field with him. And who else can be named in the same breath? Browning, perhaps, but the place of Browning is yet unfixed in the temple of fame. Perhaps, too, in the world of physical science, the world of Brewster, Faraday, and Darwin, there were to be found his intellectual compeers, but we can never place the man who observes on the same level with the man who teaches. Of European names, if we except Goethe, whom he acknowledged as his master, there is but one who can be ranked with him—Victor Hugo. He was the king of his generation, the true *ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν*,

with the eye to see, and the heart to bear and do. He was the central figure of his age, and we look even now in vain for his equal.

But, next to his grandeur, we notice his width and scope. Moralist, poet, historian, critic, counsellor, orator; and in all supremely great. And there is nothing in him of that littleness which shrinks from small duties for fear of hurting its dignity. From a criticism of Novalis to the mending of a farm-gate he is the same simple, earnest worker. He has, indeed, an antique simplicity, which of itself would mark him as one to be admired. The plainest food, the coarsest clothes, the smallest house, he took, from choice, not, in later days at least, from necessity. Tobacco was his only luxury, that and, if means permitted, a horse, but if means did not permit, he could do without it. His dearest friends were, all his life, the members of his own family circle; the author of *Friedrich* was never happier than in the Annandale farmhouse. The time breeds not many such men.

Hardly less conspicuous were the other elementary virtues of his character. Purity, earnestness, real humility of spirit, tenderness towards suffering, sympathy with wrong, it would hardly be necessary to mention these but for the fact that the world delights to stone its prophets if it can. Upon this sad subject no word can be better than one of Carlyle's own. "No man is hero to his valet," runs the proverb. "No," said Carlyle, commenting upon the aphorism; "*but that is generally the valet's*

*fault."* Men who have bound themselves hand and foot in the service of the devil, are not likely to be enthusiastic over the prophet of God.

Looking with eyes for defects over Carlyle's life, we shall find very little to reward us. Of his sins of thought, whatever they may have been, we cannot, of course, judge; we may be fairly sure that he himself did not spare them. The one fault which did indisputably mar the completeness of his moral character is one for which it is not easy to find a name. Intolerance, it might be called, or impatience. Carlyle loved his fellow-men with a deep pitying love; but their follies and stupidities roused his wrath. He looked at them from his own lofty standpoint, not from their humbler ground. But it must be remembered that his judgments, harsh as many of them read, have been in almost every case strikingly affirmed by the great critic, Time. It was because he saw more, not because he loved less, that he was so stern. Still we do not find in his character that rare combination of virtues of which we should perhaps hardly be able to form an idea had we not seen it in one or two rarest examples. To hate the sin with a perfect hatred, and yet to cherish and bear with the sinner as a loved brother who must be won by patient pleading from determined suicide, this is the sublimity of moral grandeur, and how many have attained to it? It demands total oblivion of self, perfect heroism of spirit. The few, the very few, who have reached it have won the world by the irresistible fascination of their characters. This,

something of this, was attained by him who, by unwearied self-sacrifice, achieved the freedom of his beloved country from a tyrant's yoke, and at whose death "the little children cried in the streets"—by William of Orange. Even nearer to the ideal came the great Roman emperor upon whose shoulders rested the cares of a whole world, and who, through a life of toil such as few men have borne, retained a sweetness of temper and lovingness of thought which a St. Francis might have envied. And most of all was it manifested by him by whose character, as by the sublimest of possible standards, all such efforts are tried, by him who went about doing good, and, for reward, had not where to lay his head. These we may well place above Carlyle, but where are the others?

In intellectual gifts, too, we can find but one fault. In almost every department of literature Carlyle's knowledge and power were profound. In the world of science, of course, there were many provinces which he did not profess to know, upon which he never pronounced an opinion. But there were others of which he has been accused of ignorance, simply because his conclusions do not agree with the doctrines of those who have assumed the sole right to judge. He has been laughed at by logicians, politicians, economists, metaphysicians, but with a strange forgetfulness his critics have omitted to point out *where* he was wrong. Men of letters know nothing about science, Carlyle was a man of letters, *ergo* he knew nothing about science—that is



a quite unexceptionable syllogism provided that both premises be correct. But if a man of letters may possibly know something of science, or if Carlyle was not a man of letters in the exclusive sense which the alternative implies, then perhaps the conclusion is not quite so indisputable.

But one defect of intellect, indeed, Carlyle's warmest admirers must allow. His gifts of expression were for many purposes unparalleled in power. In pathos, in humour, in impressiveness, in imaginative force, he finds no rival in modern English literature. But where perfect delicacy of style is required, combined with perfect completeness of thought, there Carlyle fails. His æsthetic faculties are at fault. The final accomplishment of the poet, which is so marked a feature of his master, Goethe, is wanting to Carlyle. He could never have written *Kennst du das Land*, he could not even translate it respectably.

But for those who make his style (oh! the style!!) an excuse for denying his greatness, we can have little sympathy. We begin to suspect, with Teufelsdröckh when his epitaph was rejected, that the "alleged defect in the Latinity" is not the real secret. People object to hearing unpalatable truths, and any excuse is good enough as an escape.

Are we to proceed to "account for" this man? Are we to point out that the conjunction of Scotch Calvinism with German literature produced Thomas Carlyle? That his *Sauerteigs*, his *Teufelsdröckhs*, and his *Crabbes* are the copies of Richter's imagi-

nary creations; that his *Sartor* is compounded from *Reinecke der Fuchs* and the *Tale of a Tub*, in about equal quantities? All these, and many more influences there were, which he himself has openly acknowledged. But that Carlyle and his works could be, so to speak, "bred" in this way,—the idea is ridiculous. Let me suggest a profitable occupation to those who are fond of such pursuits. The world could do very well with another Carlyle, or even two. It would readily agree to pay a handsome sum to any one who could produce the required article. Here then is a chance for the man of science. Let him beg, borrow, or steal an infant Scotch Calvinist, and inoculate him skilfully with German literature, especially taking care to educate him in such works as will best bear reproduction. Then let him exhibit his machine in public and claim the reward from a grateful literary world.

No, Carlyle does not remind me of a machine. There is one thing, however, of which he does most persistently remind me. Often, as I have sat by the blue waters of Lucerne, I have raised my eyes towards the south, and looked steadily at the rugged mountain which towers, like the advanced guard of an army of giants, above the lake. In the morning it is rarely clear, ever upon it are clouds and mists, and its full grandeur is not seen. At midday the sun beats on it, and the forms of pigmy tourists scaling its sides break the silent loneliness. But at night, when all around is still, when the clouds have disappeared, and the sun, and the tourists, then I

have looked again. There it stands now, complete, clear, peaceful. High above its neighbours rises the rugged cliff, its stern aspect almost, in the peace of night, turned to tenderness and welcome. From its base, girt with peaceful villages, the eye travels up its scar-seamed sides, passing here and there a twinkling light. But above all sounds and sight of men still rises that lofty form, till at last it rears its stately head into the vast arch of night, and stands there amid the eternal silence, alone—"alone with the stars." That is Carlyle.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE APOSTLE OF BENTHAMISM.

THERE is a certain abstractedness about the lives of men of science which renders them peculiarly easy to summarize. When such men have reached the point at which they definitely enter upon their life-work, the records of their existence become rather psychological studies than biographies in the ordinary sense of the term. Even the appearance of their books does not always afford a sure clue to their development, for often, as was the case with Mill, the order of publication does not correspond with the order of composition. The only way of arriving at an estimate of their position is by directing an analytical process upon their productions as a whole.

This generalization holds good in the case which we have now to study. Properly speaking, there were only two events in Mill's life—the mental crisis which he has described in the fifth chapter of the *Autobiography*, and his friendship with Mrs. Taylor. That is to say, these two circumstances only, so far

as we can tell, exercised a really decisive effect on the current of his existence.

We may, therefore, proceed to glance at the unusually valuable materials available for a study of Mill's younger days, and then, having brought him to the point at which his mental direction is fixed, we may pass lightly over the remaining circumstances of his life, and turn at once to an examination of his works.

Just as it is clear that Carlyle appeals most strongly to the moral side of our character, so it is equally clear that, if we would see Mill in his most significant aspect, we must look mainly at the speculative or intellectual side of his life. His moral character was, indeed, exceptionally admirable. An inflexible love of truth, a perfect candour and great humility of judgment, combined with purity of conduct, conspicuous generosity, a high sense of honour, and unwearied perseverance, are an ample foundation for a great and impressive character. And as such Mill undoubtedly stamped himself upon the minds of those who knew him. But still it is as the man of science, the speculative philosopher, that he lives. He laid it down himself, as his mature opinion, that "the most important and most universally interesting facts of the universe" are the facts of physical science.<sup>80</sup>

Mill was born in the year 1806. His father, James Mill, the author of a well-known work on psychology, and a still better known work on the history of

<sup>80</sup> *Inaugural Address*, p. 21.

British India, appears to have been a man distinguished rather by force than by amiability of character. "For passionate emotions of all sorts, and for everything which has been said or written in exaltation of them, he professed the greatest contempt."<sup>81</sup> "My father was not one with whom calm and full explanations on fundamental points of doctrine could be expected."<sup>82</sup> And Mill himself, highly as he esteemed his father, had, in his time of trouble, to confess that he "was the last person to whom, in such a case as this, I looked for help."<sup>83</sup> James Mill was, in fact, a man who lived by his intellect only, and chose his associates chiefly by reference to their speculative conclusions.

The main idea of this man with regard to his son's education was, that he should be made to acquire the utmost possible amount of scientific information. The extent to which the son responded to the father's plans astonishes the youth of average acquirements. Mill could not remember the time at which he began to learn Greek by the pleasing method of committing to memory lists of "vocables."<sup>84</sup> Sad to say, it was not till he was eight years old that he made acquaintance with Latin, but this neglect was soon atoned for. Before the completion of his twelfth year, he says, "my father made me study" (the Rhetoric of Aristotle) "with peculiar care, and throw the matter of it into synoptic tables."<sup>85</sup> At the age of thirteen he

<sup>81</sup> *Autobiography*, p. 49.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 179.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 135.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.



went through a complete course of political economy, and before he was sixteen he had read Bentham's *Traité de Législation*, and decided that by the philosopher of Queen's Square "all previous moralists were superseded."<sup>86</sup>

The extraordinary effect produced by this relentless system of cram is well illustrated by a confession which Mill himself makes. "It did not seem to me more strange that English people should believe what I did not, than that the men I read of in Herodotus should have done so."<sup>87</sup> Doubtless in after years Mill believed himself peculiarly fitted by this esoteric course of education to ascertain the conclusions of unbiassed consciousness, but sceptical critics may suggest that in his mind the strong influence of his father's personality took the place usually filled by a more complex series of impressions.

It is not perhaps surprising that although, as he is careful to inform us, "I neither estimated myself highly nor lowly: I did not estimate myself at all,"<sup>88</sup> people sometimes found him "disagreeably self-conceited." We all know the unmitigated disgust with which older people find themselves overcome in argument by an awkward boy in his teens, and how they are not always very scrupulous in the means they employ to turn the tables. By virtue of their superior knowledge of the world they generally succeed for the time in putting the young aspirant at a disadvantage. But the

<sup>86</sup> *Autobiography*, p. 65.      <sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.      <sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

latter's turn soon comes, and his adversaries are then probably extremely sorry that they provoked the combat.

In truth, by this process of forcing Mill acquired and always retained a shade of pedantry. "The education which my father gave me," he says, "was in itself much more fitted for training me to *know* than to *do*."<sup>89</sup> In his mature years we find him deprecating excessive praise of Cæsar, on the ground that he subverted a "free government,"<sup>90</sup> and in one of the very rare passages in which he betrays any enthusiasm, the inspiring subject is "the idea that the infinitesimal calculus is a conception analogous to the corpuscular hypothesis in physics."<sup>91</sup>

But it must be admitted that the amount of knowledge which the youthful Mill acquired by the process was surprising. In spite of the demands made on his time by his father, who did not scruple on one occasion to make him read through twenty-one years' numbers of the *Edinburgh Review* for the paternal benefit, he succeeded in amassing a store of learning which made him a most formidable disputant in the debating societies to which he soon ardently attached himself. His character at this time is a strange mixture of self-confidence and humility; he has an academic positiveness, combined

<sup>89</sup> *Autobiography*, p. 37.

<sup>90</sup> *Comte and Positivism*, p. 190. He has, of course, the precedent of Milton, but Milton is writing an avowed polemic, and seems to apologize for the argument.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 194.

with a strong conviction of the mediocrity of his natural gifts.

In estimating the influences at work upon Mill's education, his visit to France must not be forgotten. It does not correspond exactly with Carlyle's introduction to German literature, for Mill was in no particular trouble of mind at the time, and seems to have begun the study of French rather as a duty than as a refuge from despair. But the impression made upon him by French thought and modes of life was profound. It was from France that he afterwards drew his inspiration, and the contrast pictured in the *Autobiography*<sup>92</sup> between the intellectual conditions of France and England is by no means flattering to the latter country. In the year 1821, as has been noted, he made acquaintance with the great work of Bentham, and was entirely overcome by it. About this time, too, he was much in the society of the patriarch himself, so that, notwithstanding his anxiety<sup>93</sup> to disclaim the reputation of a Benthamite, we must take leave to doubt the complete independence of views which corresponded so strikingly with those of the author of the *Traité de Législation*. In 1823 Mill entered the service of the East India Company, in which he remained thirty-five years.

Just at this period Bentham was establishing the original *Westminster Review*, as the organ of those uncompromising Radicals who were dissatisfied

<sup>92</sup> *Autobiography*, pp. 59, 60.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 105.

with the half-hearted tone of the *Edinburgh*. The appearance of the *Westminster* will long be remembered as a literary event by the amusing outburst of indignation which shook the pages of the great critical organ when it found the tables turned upon it in a most audacious way. Not content with expressing opinions opposed to those of the Whig magazine, the founders of the *Westminster* went to the length of publishing a scathing criticism from the pen of James Mill upon the whole career of the *Edinburgh*. It was on this occasion that Mill performed the office of literary scavenger to his father, by reading through the twenty-one volumes of the *Edinburgh* which had by that time appeared.

In the pages of the new magazine Mill began to attempt the reformation of the world on the lines of Bentham. He appears to have thought that a persistent application of logic would convince people that the prejudices which they had inherited from their forefathers ought to be immediately discarded. His ambition was, at least mainly, intellectual. "While fully recognizing the superior excellence of unselfish benevolence and love of justice, we did not expect the regeneration of mankind from any direct action on those sentiments, but from the effect of educated intellect enlightening the selfish feelings."<sup>94</sup> And again, "My zeal was as yet little else, at that period of my life, than zeal for speculative opinions."<sup>95</sup> The immediate application which was to be made

<sup>94</sup> *Autobiography*, p. 111.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 109.

of the teachings of the new apostles was the development of representative government, and the promotion of unlimited freedom of discussion.<sup>96</sup> It was, perhaps, rather a scanty foundation upon which to build a regenerated society, but it seemed sufficient to its supporters at the time.

Meanwhile Mill had worn off a little of his aloofness by joining, or rather forming, one or two societies for the discussion of various questions, and had thus lost somewhat of the pedantry which, as he himself confesses, distinguished his earliest efforts.

These occupations and objects carried him on with apparent satisfaction till his twenty-first year. Then occurred that crisis in his mental history which is so well described in the fifth chapter of the *Autobiography*, and which really decided the direction of his life. He fell into a state of extreme depression, partly mental, partly physical, induced, probably, by overwork. Those who have had any experience of the distressing effects of nervous exhaustion will be able to sympathize with Mill. The illness, for such it really is, usually proceeds entirely from physical causes, but with a cruel caprice generally expends its chief force on the mind, leaving the body, to all appearance, untouched. The mind's eye becomes hopelessly distorted, every object is seen in its worst possible light, mankind in general appear to be hovering on the brink of the grave, every post seems to bring the news of a friend's death, the smallest spot on the skin is an incipient cancer, and

<sup>96</sup> *Autobiography*, p. 106.



a feeling of the general futility of all things takes possession of the sufferer. The precise form in which the attack came to Mill is best described in his own words. "In this frame of mind it occurred to me to put the question directly to myself: 'Suppose that all your objects in life were realized; that all the changes in institutions and opinions which you are looking forward to could be completely effected at this very instant, would this be a great joy and happiness to you?' And an irrepressible self-consciousness distinctly answered, 'No.'" <sup>97</sup> This answer plunged him into despair. He had no friends in whom to confide; according to all his previous beliefs he had been furnished completely with armour against such a miserable catastrophe as this, and yet he had failed ignominiously. The machinery was all in perfect working order, but there was no work to be done. "I was thus, as I said to myself, left stranded at the commencement of my voyage, with a well-equipped ship and rudder, but no sail." <sup>98</sup>

Not only had his philosophy failed in bringing him, or allowing him to fall, into this condition; it now proved entirely unable to extricate him. The deliverance came in a wholly unscientific way. Instead of proving to himself by a correct process of reasoning that his condition was absurd, and that there was no foundation for his dissatisfaction,—in fact, demonstrating that it did not exist,—Mill

<sup>97</sup> *Autobiography*, p. 134.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 139.



continued to lie helpless till a sudden flash of insight stirred the darkness. "I was reading, accidentally, Marmontel's *Mémoires*, and came to the passage which relates his father's death, the distressed position of the family, and the sudden inspiration by which he, then a mere boy, felt and made them feel that he would be everything to them—would supply the place of all that they had lost. A vivid conception of the scene and its feelings came over me, and I was moved to tears. From this moment my burden grew lighter."<sup>99</sup> It seemed that deep below that artificial mass of learning there was a human heart after all, which refused to be satisfied with the pursuit of its own happiness. "The only chance is to treat, not happiness, but some end external to it, as the purpose of life."<sup>100</sup> Moreover, he had come to see that humanity was not solely composed of intellectual faculties. "I ceased to attach almost exclusive importance to the ordering of outward circumstances, and the training of the human being for speculation and action."<sup>101</sup> He found that man had a soul as well as a brain, and that spiritual culture was the necessary counterpart of intellectual gymnastics.

In both points, then, in the nature of the relief and the way in which it came, Mill's philosophy had received a severe shock. The answer to his difficulties had been, not some supremely ingenious triumph of mental science, whereby the enemy was frightened

<sup>99</sup> *Autobiography*, p. 140.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 142.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 143.

off for ever, but the command to turn his eyes away from study of himself to the contemplation of a great moral object. And this answer had not been the result of a carefully worked out scientific process, but had come by a flash of intuition. No wonder that Mill felt his confidence in his "system" shaken—in fact, that he renounced it as a system altogether, and substituted for it "a conviction that the true system was something much more complex and many-sided than I had previously had any idea of, and that its office was to supply, not a set of model institutions, but principles from which the institutions suitable to any given circumstances might be deduced."<sup>102</sup> He found that Coleridge and Wordsworth, and even Shelley, were as necessary as Hartley and Condillac, and it is characteristic of the circle in which he had previously moved that, though the most peaceable of men, he was obliged, by this conclusion, to break with one at least of its members.<sup>103</sup> He became aware of a wider range of sympathies in the men whose acquaintance he now made, and it is probably to the happy issue of this crisis that we owe that broad appreciation of all the sides of a vexed question which so honourably distinguishes Mill's writings. One of the acquaintanceships which he made about this time claims our special attention, for the other party to the relation was no less a person than Thomas Carlyle.

<sup>102</sup> *Autobiography*, p. 161.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 150.

The friendship, for it amounted to friendship at one time, between Mill and Carlyle, is more fitly recorded in our account of the former than the latter, for while there is no evidence that the prophet of Craigenputtock was in any way influenced by the disciple of Bentham, there is good reason to believe that, for a time at least, there was considerable influence the other way. One of Carlyle's vivid word-portraits gives us a good notion of Mill at this time. "A slender, rather tall and elegant youth, with small, clear, Roman-nosed face, two small, earnestly-smiling eyes, modest, remarkably gifted with precision of utterance, enthusiastic, yet lucid, calm ; not a great, yet distinctly a gifted and amiable youth."<sup>101</sup> It is essentially the same Mill as that depicted for us in the statue on the Thames Embankment.

The circumstance which brought the two together was the appearance, in the *Examiner* of 1831, of a series of articles by Mill entitled *The Spirit of the Age*. Some expressions respecting the ultimate end of political institutions, as the discovery of the best and wisest men in a nation, led Carlyle to exclaim, "Here is a new Mystic," and, in spite of Mill's disclaimer, he persisted for some time in the opinion. At first the poetical form in which Carlyle's teaching was embodied hid its real value from the scientific mind of Mill, but after his mental attitude changed he received the message eagerly, not, however, "as philosophy to instruct, but as poetry to

<sup>101</sup> *First Forty*, vol. ii., p. 190.

animate." <sup>105</sup> The estimate of his new friend formed by the younger man is interesting, and puts with admirable clearness what is perhaps the true relationship between the two.

"I did not, however, deem myself a competent judge of Carlyle. I felt that he was a poet, and that I was not; that he was a man of intuition, which I was not; and that as such, he not only saw many things long before me, which I could only when they were pointed out to me, hobble after and prove, but that it was highly probable he could see many things which were not visible to me even after they were pointed out. I knew that I could not see round him, and could never be certain that I saw over him; and I never presumed to judge him with any definiteness, until he was interpreted to me by one greatly the superior of us both—who was more a poet than he, and more a thinker than I—whose nature included his, and infinitely more." <sup>106</sup>

This exceptionally gifted person was probably Mrs. Taylor.

At first Mill was entirely overcome by the superior genius of his friend, as he had once been by the genius of Bentham. He entered upon a long correspondence after Carlyle's return to Scotland in 1832, and we cannot but regret that the letters of this period, which would throw so much light upon the relationship of two such striking figures, should be unattainable by the outside public. Mr. Froude seems to hint that although Carlyle's part of the correspondence is lost for ever, Mill's letters may possibly some day be published. May it be so; and *without commentary*.

<sup>105</sup> *Autobiography*, p. 175.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 176.

A little incident which happened just after Carlyle's final settlement in London has become classical. Mill had borrowed the manuscript of the first volume of the *French Revolution*, being ardently interested in the subject as well as the author. One evening he appeared at Cheyne Row, a ghastly picture of despair, to announce that through his carelessness the volume had been destroyed. The whole picture is very pathetic. Carlyle, though the loss was crushing, for he knew what it meant, heroically put himself aside, and did his best to comfort his agonized friend. The latter, with a want of tact which was all his life one of his failings, stayed for hours reiterating his apologies, poor Carlyle being only anxious on his own part to be alone with his wife, that they might have a good cry over the sorrow. At last Mill went, and after the door had closed the first words Carlyle said were, "Well, Mill, poor fellow, is terribly cut up; we must endeavour to hide from him how very serious this business is to us."<sup>107</sup> After a piteous night he found resignation, and determined with indomitable resolution to begin the task again. The pecuniary loss—for Carlyle was within measurable distance of want—Mill honourably insisted on making good, much against his friend's wish; but the mental and physical labour involved in a re-writing could only find its reward in the discipline which it afforded to Carlyle himself.

Indeed, so close was the intimacy, that Mill at

<sup>107</sup> *Second Forty*, vol. i., p. 28.



one time seems to have contemplated transferring a part of his exegetical powers from the writings of Bentham to those of Carlyle.<sup>108</sup> It is impossible to speculate as to what would have been the result of a combination of such diverse qualities ; probably it was far better that Carlyle should be left, with all his obscurity, to speak for himself.

But the friendship was not to last. Mill believed himself to have done the *French Revolution* a substantial good by a well-timed and enthusiastic review of it in the *Westminster* ; and when Carlyle's pamphlet on *Chartism* was written, he offered, though the circumstances made the offer not too flattering, to let it appear in the final number of the same magazine. As time went on, however, it became evident that Mill's heart was still with Benthamism, and Carlyle's teaching grew too uncompromising to allow of its acceptance by orthodox Radicals. Upon the publication of *The Nigger Question* Mill openly declared war, in terms which Carlyle dismissed with curt contempt.<sup>109</sup> Henceforward the friendship was at an end. How far it ultimately influenced Mill's character : it is very difficult to say. We find, scattered up and down in his works, frequent references to Carlyle's teaching, but nearly always in a tone which seems to argue, at the least, considerable doubt as to its wisdom. The only event which can with safety be pronounced to have had a lasting effect upon Mill's

<sup>108</sup> *Autobiography*, p. 243.

<sup>109</sup> *Second Forty*, p. 28.



mind, after the passing of the mental crisis described in the fifth chapter of the *Autobiography*, is that to which we must now allude, his acquaintance with Mrs. Taylor.

It is somewhat of a relief to find that, notwithstanding the character of his early training, Mill was still capable of falling in love. When and how the earlier feeling which he entertained for the wife of his friend passed into the stronger passion which he admitted to himself after the death of her husband, is a psychological question which it would be hardly profitable to discuss. From the tone in which the references to her in the *Autobiography* are written, we may infer that he was, at least after her husband's death, in love with her to the fullest extent of the phrase. We have surmised that she is the person to whom he makes allusion as one "who was more a poet than he" (Carlyle), "and more a thinker than I." In another place he compares her, in her early days, to Shelley: "but in thought and intellect, Shelley, so far as his powers were developed in his short life, was but a child compared with what she ultimately became."<sup>110</sup> With the example of Comte before us, we shall be careful in accepting the testimony even of a scientific philosopher, on such a subject, as literal criticism. Mrs. Taylor never published anything in her own name; we are therefore unable to tell how far Mill's subsequent writings were influenced, and in what direction, by this remarkable combination of Carlyle

<sup>110</sup> *Autobiography*, p. 186.

and Shelley. But, with George Eliot for an instance of woman's powers, we cannot assume that Mill's testimony is solely due to the intoxicating atmosphere of love.

In 1851 Mill was made happy by a marriage with Mrs. Taylor, whom the death of her first husband had set free. In 1858, upon the incorporation of the government of India with the general administration of the State, he retired from a service in which he had laboured faithfully for many years, with the most flattering expressions of approval. He had some time before been able, to his satisfaction, "to indulge the inclination, natural to thinking persons when the age of boyish vanity is once past, for limiting my own society to a very few persons."<sup>111</sup> He now prepared, in furtherance of this resolution, to set off, in company with his wife, for a prolonged visit to the South of Europe. But his hopes were cruelly frustrated by the death of his companion in the first winter of their travel. Henceforward Avignon, the place of her burial, was his real home. He bought a small property there, and, in the isolation to which his character had always tended, sat down, almost alone, to his literary labours. Once only did he emerge, for any lengthened period, from his retreat. In the year 1865 he appeared like a spectre from the grave (for the general impression was that he had been some time dead) to take his seat as member for Westminster in the House of Commons. The

<sup>111</sup> *Autobiography*, p. 227.

manner of his election, and the conception he formed of his duties, are no less creditable to himself than to the electors who agreed to his terms. The request to stand came quite spontaneously, and Mill would only consent on the terms that he should do no personal canvassing, and should not be bound to represent the local interests of his constituency in the House. The scene in which he confessed, in the presence of a large meeting of working-men, to the charge of having imputed to the working classes that they were "given to lying," is too well known to need description. But the passage in which he describes the plan which he followed during his three sessions is well worth quoting, as a silent criticism upon the motives which actuate the bulk of politicians. "When I had gained the ear of the House . . . the idea I proceeded on was that when anything was likely to be as well done, or sufficiently well done, by other people, there was no necessity for me to meddle with it."<sup>112</sup> But on subjects which few would incur the odium of dealing with, although their genuine principles should have led them that way, Mill stood up in unflinching advocacy of the Radical cause.

As a matter of course he lost his seat at the next election, and turned back with perfect equanimity to his Avignonese seclusion. He remained, as he had long been, the inspirer and counsellor of the Radical party till his death in 1870. We have seen what was Mill's opinion of Carlyle. It will hardly do to

<sup>112</sup> *Autobiography*, p. 284.

close this sketch of Mill's life without recording the final impression which he made upon the mind of his quondam friend, although the passage is one which exhibits Carlyle's characteristic fault of intolerance in its strongest light.

"You have lost nothing by missing the *Autobiography* of Mill. I have never read a more uninteresting book, nor I should say a sillier, by a man of sense, integrity, and seriousness of mind. The penny-a-liners were very busy with it, I believe, for a week or two, but were evidently pausing in doubt and difficulty by the time the second edition came out. It is wholly the life of a logic-chopping engine, little more of human in it than if it had been done by a thing of mechanized iron. Autobiography of a steam-engine, perhaps, you may sometimes read it. As a mournful psychical curiosity, but in no other point of view, can it interest anybody. I suppose it will deliver us henceforth from the cock-a-leerie crow about 'the Great Thinker of his Age.' Welcome, though inconsiderable! The thought of poor Mill altogether, and of his life and history in this poor muddy world, give me real pain and sorrow."<sup>113</sup>

Upon this estimate we shall take leave to differ from Carlyle. It may well have been that, to a man of his spiritual experience and insight, the record of Mill's life afforded no instruction. But to average mortals the history of a man of only ordinary abilities, who has raised himself, by patient perseverance and willingness to learn, to a position from which he can survey almost the whole continent of scientific knowledge, and draw from it such treasures as he firmly believes will be serviceable to his fellow-men, who affords an example of unwearied conscien-

<sup>113</sup> *Second Forty*, p. 420.

tiousness such as few men have to show, who is, in all the relations of life, dutiful, affectionate, and sympathetic,—such a history will never be without value.

## II.

We have now to consider what was the teaching of Mill, both generally upon the conduct of life, and, to a certain extent, specifically in its various departments. In estimating the teaching of a man of science it would not be permissible for a writer who treats his subject from a literary point of view to enter into a discussion of the abstract soundness of scientific doctrines. It is rather his business to consider those doctrines in their relationship to life, and to endeavour to gauge their effect, actual and potential, upon the world.

It is fairly clear, from expressions in his writings, that Mill regarded the state of a man's intellectual faculties as the key to his character.<sup>114</sup> If we have taken anything like a true view of Mill himself, the maxim, whether sound or not as a general rule, holds good in his case. The circumstances of his life show that on almost all occasions he was the slave of his intellectual convictions. It becomes, therefore, important to summarise these convictions. And it will be almost a matter of course to begin

<sup>114</sup> Cf., *e.g.*, *Logic*, bk. vi., c. xi., § 2, and *Bentham*, "Dissertations and Discussions," vol. i., p. 357. "The first question in regard to any man of speculation is, what is his theory of human life?"



with his views upon the general system of the universe.

The universe may be considered, according to the general consent of philosophers, under two apparently distinct aspects, variously expressed as the Internal and the External, the Ego and the Non-Ego, Mind and Matter. With regard to the external or material portion of the universe Mill accepted the psychological theory, which, postulating a mind capable of expectation, and also certain well-known laws of association of ideas, explains matter as causes or groups of causes, producing or tending to produce sensations. "Matter, then, may be defined a Permanent Possibility of Sensation. If I am asked whether I believe in matter, I ask whether the questioner accepts this view of it. If he does, I believe in matter: and so do all Berkeleians. In any other sense than this I do not."<sup>115</sup> The determination of the transcendentalist philosophers to see behind the *phenomena* of matter, a province of *noumena*, to which *phenomena* owe their existence, Mill regarded as nothing more than a conclusion induced, through the powerful influence of association, by a consideration of the law of causation.

With regard to mind, Mill was much less sure. Memory was to him an ultimate, inexplicable fact; but he inclined to the psychological view of mind as a series of sensations in some way unified by this inexplicable fact of memory.<sup>116</sup> As this Memory

<sup>115</sup> *Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy*, p. 233.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 248, 251.



may at any time reproduce past sensations without any apparent reference to the existing conditions of matter, a certain addition has to be made to complete the theory. Accordingly, mind is said to consist of a series of feelings, with a background of possibilities of feeling. To this theory Mill, though he expressly declines complete adherence to it, did clearly very strongly lean.

With regard to man's position in this universe, Mill named himself a necessitarian, but a necessitarian who was nothing of a fatalist. The doctrine of necessity he regarded only as a form of statement of the law of causation. Given all the antecedents, the consequences could be unerringly predicted; the reason why the law of causation was denied in connection with human conduct being, simply, that the antecedents were countless in number, and hard to discover. But in the causes of a particular action Mill by no means omitted to include the volitions of the individual, merely considering them as themselves part of a chain of causation. "His" (a man's) "character is formed by his circumstances (including among these his particular organization), but his own desire to mould it in a particular way is one of those circumstances, and by no means one of the least influential."<sup>117</sup> And the peculiarity of this desire, that which gives it its significant position of individuality, is that it is formed mainly by

<sup>117</sup> *Logic*, bk. vi., chap. i., §§ 2, 3; *Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy*, c. xxvi.; and *Autobiography*, p. 169.

things exterior to the organization, viz., by experience.

Beyond this point Mill was an agnostic. Like his father, he "yielded to the conviction that, concerning the origin of things, nothing whatever can be known."<sup>118</sup> Through all his life he showed the utmost tenderness for those who built upon the belief of a divine agency as the creative force of the universe, provided that they did not make their belief the basis of a scientific polemic. On such occasions, of course, he felt bound to point out what he deemed the flaws in their process. But he never made any dogmatic assertion of atheism.

It is not very difficult to see how this scientific creed translated itself into Mill's system of ethics. His belief was that man's existence consisted of sensations and possibilities of sensations. Regarded in their ultimate effects, sensations could be divided into two classes, pleasurable and painful, with, perhaps, a third class of indifferent. Not only did Mill believe that the true end of ethics was to maximise the amount of pleasurable sensations in the world, and to minimise that of the painful, but he believed also that this was the object which every man, so far as regarded his own case, consciously or unconsciously set before himself. The point to be noticed was, however, that few people avowed this object, the majority disguising it under forms which, for various reasons, they preferred to open acknow-

<sup>118</sup> *Autobiography*, p. 39.

ledgment. And moreover some people were much wiser than others in the means adopted.

"By happiness is intended pleasure, and the absence of pain ; by unhappiness, pain, and the absence of pleasure." <sup>119</sup>

So far Mill is plain enough, but he is not quite so clear when he comes to the proof of his assertion that all men are really seeking happiness.

"Questions about ends are, in other words, questions what things are desirable. . . . In like manner, I apprehend, the sole evidence it is possible to produce that anything is desirable, is that people do actually desire it. If the end which the utilitarian doctrine proposes to itself were not, in theory and in practice, acknowledged to be an end, nothing could ever convince any person that it was so. No reason can be given why the general happiness is desirable, except that each person, so far as he believes it to be attainable, desires his own happiness." <sup>120</sup>

It must be painfully evident to anyone at all acquainted with the amenities of controversy that in these passages lie ample opportunities for the most unprofitable verbal wrangling. But in such a fundamental matter it is allowable for a critic to make one or two observations, having due regard to the dangers ahead.

*Utilitarianism* was written as a popular exposition of the doctrine from which the work takes its name. It must be presumed therefore that the author intended his language to be understood in its ordinary,—not, where the two senses disagree, in its technical meaning. If this view be correct, Mill

<sup>119</sup> *Utilitarianism*, p. 10.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 52, 53.

appears to have overlooked the ambiguity to which his use of the word "desirable" gives rise. According to him, the thing desirable is that which is actually desired. But that is not the ordinary use of the term. A thing which is "desirable" is not that which *is* desired, but that which *ought to be* desired. It is no more true, according to the ordinary use of language, that "desirable" means "that which is desired," than that "considerable" means "that which is considered." In each case the word, although it may have had originally a purely logical sense, has long since come, by a process of transition with which all philologists are familiar, to acquire an ethical, or, as Bentham would have said, a "deontological" meaning. I admit that the introduction of the idea of "ought" involves the whole question of ethical philosophy, but the point is whether Mill was justified in quietly passing over all that question. As it stands, his assertion is purely dogmatic.

Again, *is* it a fact that "each person, so far as he believes it to be attainable, desires his own happiness"? This question resolves itself into two: the question of object, and the question of quantity. In the first place, experience seems to contradict flatly the dictum that each person desires his own happiness. Putting aside the cases of those who deny the assertion with their lips,—which denial is as much entitled to be believed as any other testimony of human beings to their own mental condition,—we may look at the instances of those whose actions seem to contradict the theory. A sane person who

deliberately does an act which he knows to be inconsistent with his happiness, can hardly be said, in the ordinary use of language, to desire happiness. Take the case of Charlotte Corday. She conceived it to be her duty to assassinate Marat. She knew perfectly well that the immediate consequence of her act would be death by the guillotine. There is no evidence that she was leading an unhappy life before her resolution was taken, and there is very strong evidence that she had no belief in a future state in which compensation for loss of happiness in this world would be given. Yet she deliberately executed her purpose, and as deliberately awaited the consequences. On no theory, except a theory which begs the very question at issue, can she be accounted insane. If happiness be, as Mill defines it, "pleasure and the absence of pain," Charlotte Corday did not desire happiness.

But if it be said that men desire happiness only so far as the feeling is not counterbalanced by some alternative desire, then the limitation "so far as he believes it to be attainable" is unmeaning. "Desire" is no longer an absolute, but a relative expression, representing only a conviction that a certain thing would be pleasant if it could be had. There seems, however, no reason for limiting the feeling by the possibilities of the case. I may desire a thing very ardently, though I may know that I have not the slightest chance of attaining it.

It must be carefully remembered that Mill did not, in his mature years, propose happiness, either of

the individual or the community, as the conscious standard of action. This had been his view in the earlier days of his adhesion to Benthamism, but he discarded it before attaining his intellectual majority. Utility, by which famous term Mill means conduciveness to happiness, is only to be the ultimate test to which doubtful questions are referred.

“Those who adopt utility as a standard can seldom apply it truly except through the secondary principles; those who reject it generally do no more than erect those secondary principles into first principles. It is when two or more of the secondary principles conflict, that a direct appeal to some first principle becomes necessary; and then commences the practical importance of the utilitarian controversy; which is, in other respects, a question of arrangement and logical subordination rather than of practice.”<sup>121</sup>

The “secondary principles” referred to in this passage are the intuitive ideas of justice, truth, right and wrong, mercy, revenge, by which the conduct of the average man is really governed. It does occur to me here to wonder whether the differences between the moral views of the two men who are the subject of this essay have not been greatly exaggerated. It was probably Carlyle’s private opinion that the steady pursuit of the ends commonly understood by the terms justice, right, truth, and such like, would in the long run lead to the happiness both of the individual and the race; but if he entertained this view, it was as a speculation only, and his profound conviction of the mistake of making happiness the aim would lead him to sup-

<sup>121</sup> *Bentham*, “Dissertations,” vol. i., p. 385.



press any such opinion, lest it might weaken his invective against the Benthamite doctrine. Mill, on the other hand, seems to admit that the ordinary intuitive process by which men shape their lives does, in healthy cases, tend towards an unconscious pursuit of utility; but his deep distrust of the intuitive process led him to exaggerate the importance of a *τέλος* which, in his view, could be attained only by experimental methods. But it must be admitted that on one point, the famous doctrine of *Entsagen*, the difference seems irreconcilable. Mill could not appreciate renunciation unless it resulted, or at least was intended to result, in the happiness of others. "All honour to those who can abnegate for themselves the personal enjoyment of life, when by such renunciation they contribute worthily to increase the amount of happiness in the world; but he who does it, or professes to do it, for any other purpose, is no more deserving of admiration than the ascetic mounted on his pillar."<sup>122</sup> Whether or not Carlyle regarded renunciation as an act to be "admired," is a difficult question to answer; but it is quite clear from the passage in *Sartor* that he looked upon it as the beginning of the higher life, quite apart from any considerations of happiness.

It is worth while noticing that a few years before the publication of *Utilitarianism* Mill seems to have been attracted to another formula as an expression of the final aim of conduct. This was the celebrated maxim of Wilhelm von Humboldt, that

<sup>122</sup> *Utilitarianism*, p. 23.

"the end of man, or that which is prescribed by the eternal or immutable dictates of reason, is the highest and most harmonious development of his powers to a complete and consistent whole."<sup>123</sup> This maxim was, however, ultimately discarded for the older standard, though it was destined to be naturalized in England by another foster-father. Readers of Mr. Matthew Arnold's prose works will have no difficulty in tracing its presence.

Meanwhile, however, it is necessary to remark that Mill gives a very wide as well as lofty meaning to the word "pleasure," considered as the foundation of happiness. In addition to the admitted stomachic or animal pleasures, there are the pleasures to be derived from a contemplation of "the objects of nature, the achievements of art, the imaginations of poetry, the incidents of history, the ways of mankind past and present, and their prospects in the future."<sup>124</sup> And the happiness kept in mind by the utilitarian is not his own, but the general happiness. "I must again repeat, what the assailants of utilitarianism seldom have the justice to acknowledge, that the happiness which forms the utilitarian standard of what is right in conduct is not the agent's own happiness, but that of all concerned."<sup>125</sup> Unfortunately, however, Mill does not appear to resolve a very elementary difficulty on this point, which presents itself as an insuperable barrier to the understanding of the "Greatest

<sup>123</sup> *Liberty*, p. 33.

<sup>124</sup> *Utilitarianism*, p. 20.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

Happiness" principle by the ordinary mind. "Greatest Happiness of the Greatest Number." Yes, but suppose there is a question between the happiness and the number. Of two alternative acts, let one produce  $x$  happiness divided amongst six people, and the other  $2x$  happiness divided amongst four people. Which is to be preferred, on the utilitarian principle? I am the proprietor of two theatres, one of which holds two hundred people, the other five hundred. In the former only does the law allow me to provide free entertainments. It is a question whether I am to give a free performance in the small theatre to two hundred charity children, to each of whom the amount of happiness afforded would be infinitely greater than that derived by an ordinary paying theatre-goer from the same performance; or whether, by playing in the larger theatre, I shall afford pleasure to five hundred persons instead of two hundred. It may be that, measured by Bentham's Table, the gross amount of pleasure will be greater in the former case, which will accordingly produce the Greatest Happiness, but the alternative gives happiness to the Greatest Number. Which is to be preferred?

So much for Mill's teleology. We must now look at the means by which the desired end was to be won.

In one place Mill asserts that a happy life would be attainable by the majority of mankind but for two obstacles. "The present wretched education, and

wretched social arrangements, are the only real hindrance to its being attainable by almost all."<sup>126</sup> It may then be deemed fairly evident that he considered the improvement of education and the reform of social arrangements to be indispensable means towards the desired end. And in another place he points towards the progress of physical science as the general means by which the object is to be gained.<sup>127</sup> We may therefore with fairness assume that in his view it was to the general pursuit of science, mental and physical, that the energies of mankind should be turned. Undoubtedly he does elsewhere insist, theoretically, upon the duty of cultivating the moral and æsthetic, as well as the scientific faculties, but the whole tenor of his life and writings goes to show that it was to the latter that he almost entirely devoted himself. It is very instructive to look at the speech delivered by Mill as Rector of St. Andrew's, just a year after Carlyle's famous appearance at Edinburgh. Carlyle had spoken a few simple words, urging the cultivation of noble and manly qualities; Mill takes his hearers over the whole field of learning, examining its furrows one by one, suggesting improvements here and there, pointing out the uses of this and that, but apparently with little heed to that to which all culture ought to be subordinate, the progress in dignity and completeness of man himself. The special danger of such a philosophy as Mill's is that it becomes absorbed in the means and forgets the end.

<sup>126</sup> *Utilitarianism*, p. 19.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

With regard to the method to be used for acquiring this beneficial knowledge Mill was very positive. He was a firm adherent of the experimental school, to which of course his venerated leader, Bentham, belonged. Intuitions Mill regarded as the results of previous experience, consolidated and petrified by the working of the laws of association,—in fact, as inductions framed when the means for framing sound inductions were less available than in the present time. “The notion that truths external to the mind may be known by intuition or consciousness, independently of observation and experience, is, I am persuaded, in these times, the great intellectual support of false doctrines and false institutions.”<sup>128</sup> And in the St. Andrew’s speech he took special care to warn his hearers against being “led away by talk about inarticulate giants who do great deeds without knowing how, and see into the most recondite truths without any of the ordinary helps, and without being able to explain to other people how they reach their conclusions, nor consequently to convince any other people of the truth of them.”<sup>129</sup> He wrote a long and careful book against the acknowledged head of the philosophic intuitional school, Sir William Hamilton, and may without doubt be considered as adhering strictly to the last to his position. Yet there are one

<sup>128</sup> *Autobiography*, p. 225, and cf. *Comte and Positivism*, p. 72.

<sup>129</sup> *Inaugural Address*, p. 27, and cf. also, p. 22 :—“There are but two roads by which truth can be discovered, observation and reasoning.”



or two passages in his works which seem to show an appreciation of the value of intuition. "In scientific investigation, as in all other works of human skill, the way of obtaining the end is seen as it were instinctively by superior minds in some comparatively simple case, and is then, by judicious generalisation, adapted to a variety of complex cases."<sup>130</sup> As a matter of fact, *discoveries* are nearly always made that way. Kant himself has admitted the inability of pure reason to discover truth. And it is somewhat strange that Mill should not have seen that his own view of intuitions, as the spontaneous development of long courses of experience, was consistent with, nay, almost necessarily involved, a very high appreciation of their value. This obvious criticism has, of course, been suggested by Mr. Herbert Spencer.<sup>131</sup>

But with regard to the methods of experimental treatment, Mill made a great advance on the merely empirical and analytical system of Bentham. Perhaps the most suggestive and valuable part of his *Logic* is that in which he urges that the investigation of mental and physical phenomena should be carried on by a double process. The law is evolved by a deduction from the fundamental laws of mind and matter already known, and it is then to be verified by a rigorous application of induction to the results of observation and experiment. Or the process may be conducted in the inverse order. In the science of history, for instance, the science which treats of

<sup>130</sup> *Logic*, book vi., cap. i., § 1.

<sup>131</sup> *Data of Ethics*, ed. 1879, p. 123.



the development of communities of men, it is useless to make shallow generalisations from empirical observation of events. These generalisations must be shown to coincide with the laws of ethology, with the fundamental development of human character, before they can claim to be looked upon as anything more than accidents. "Accordingly the most erroneous generalisations are continuously made from the course of history : not only in this country, where history cannot yet be said to be at all cultivated as a science, but in other countries where it is so cultivated, and by persons well versed in it. The only check or corrective is constant verification by psychological and ethological laws."<sup>132</sup>

The fundamental laws upon which all the deductive sciences are based Mill appears to allow were originally the result of simple intuition,<sup>133</sup> but he in one place lays it down, rather dogmatically, that "nearly all the thoughts which can be reached, by mere strength of original faculties, have long since been arrived at."<sup>134</sup> This proposition seems to be somewhat of the same character with those which its author has elsewhere very wisely criticised, to the effect that we cannot for the future expect any great original productions in poetry and music.

Finally, we may notice one piece of advice which Mill gave to the St. Andrew's students, as stamping definitely the whole character of his method, and

<sup>132</sup> *Logic*, book vi., cap. x., § 4.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>134</sup> *Subjection of Women*, p. 134.

pointing out clearly the limits which that method inevitably set to his range of thought. "*If you want to know whether you are thinking rightly, put your thought into words.*"<sup>135</sup> No single sentence could show Mill's position more clearly than this, nor more clearly mark him off from the other thinker with whom this essay deals. The bent of his mind was wholly logical, and logic is not creative, but explanatory. Notwithstanding Mill's heroic attempt to claim for ratiocination the power of making discoveries,<sup>136</sup> it appears probable that he can only succeed by limiting the meaning of the term "discovery" to results which lie only just beyond the border line of existing knowledge. It may possibly be that intuition is really a lightning process of inference, but though differing thus only in degree, it is clearly distinguishable by every one from the process of ratiocination, still more from that part of ratiocination which consists of pure syllogisms. Logic is admirable as a testing-instrument, but it requires continually to be brought up to the level of new discoveries. It is the second thing, but not the first. It is the mistress of science, but the handmaid of art; and art came before science.

It is impossible to give more than a glance at the details of the work which Mill did in the field of science. His productions are invariably characterised by three prominent features. They are distinguished, first, by the close relationship which

<sup>135</sup> *Inaugural Address*, p. 27.

<sup>136</sup> *Logic*, book ii., cap. iii., § 2.

they bear to actual life. In illustration no less than in application the author shows an appreciation of the conditions of life as a whole which renders his works, even to the non-scientific reader, a continual source of interest. It is a tradition of economists that Mill once contemplated constructing his famous work upon the principle of the "economic man," *i.e.*, by figuring to himself a being possessed of but one positive impulse, the desire of making money, and one negative quality, laziness; intending, after working out his conclusions upon this basis, to render them practical by making various allowances for the complex conditions of human nature. But his wide knowledge of the allowances which would have to be made led him to abandon the scheme, with the result that the work as we now have it is one of the most human and vital productions on the difficult subject of political economy.

Again, we notice in Mill's works a singular fearlessness in the application of principles. In his juvenile days he had once in his father's company made use of the very common expression that something was true in theory but false in practice.<sup>137</sup> The outburst of paternal wrath which followed the utterance of this fallacy by a boy of twelve seems to have sunk deep into his mind, and though the picture of the wretched youth striving to evolve a definition of theory, and the angry father upbraiding him for his "unparalleled ignorance," may provoke mingled feelings of mirth and indignation, there can be no

<sup>137</sup> *Autobiography*, p. 32.

doubt that the world owes a great deal to the elder Mill's severity. There is very little chance of an unsound principle hiding its weakness from the eye of a thinker who pursues its application to the very utmost limits of practice, and, when he has once accepted it, relies upon it absolutely in his future speculations.

Thirdly, the feature of patience is very strongly noticeable in Mill's writings. We know by his *Autobiography* that many of them occupied years in composition, were read and re-read, and always re-written, that they might finally be the result of his maturest thought. To this quality Mill himself attached the highest importance.

"It was through them" (*i.e.*, the meetings at Grote's house) "that I acquired, or very much strengthened, a mental habit to which I attribute all that I have ever done, or ever shall do, in speculation; that of never accepting half-solutions of difficulties as complete; never abandoning a puzzle, but again and again returning to it until it was cleared up; never allowing obscure corners of it to remain unexplored, because they did not appear important; never thinking that I properly understood any part of a subject until I understood the whole."<sup>138</sup>

And all readers of Mill's books can bear ample testimony to the impression of security which the evidence of this care makes upon them.

To turn, however, to our short view of the works themselves. Mill's labours were concerned principally with three departments of speculation—politics, political economy, and logic. With the first of these his name is for ever identified as an unflinching champion

<sup>138</sup> *Autobiography*, p. 123.

of the doctrine of *laissez-faire*, and as an earnest but conscientious advocate of representative government. With regard to the object of the state, and consequently the limit of state authority, he has spoken clearly in that which he has himself described as the most carefully composed and sedulously corrected of his writings<sup>139</sup>—the essay *On Liberty*. He has there laid it down that “the sole end for which mankind are warranted, individually or collectively, in interfering with the liberty of action of any of their number, is self-protection.”<sup>140</sup> This principle Mill applied only to societies in a certain stage of development, not perhaps exactly defined, but which would in his view undoubtedly have included all European countries at the present day, except, possibly, Spain. With regard to these countries, Mill held firmly to the conviction that each individual was the best judge of his own interests, and, apparently, did not accept the view that the misery of a large part of the community is of itself, apart from its ultimate consequences, an evil from which the remainder ought to be protected. The state of affairs contemplated by the advocates of the *laissez-faire* principle was briefly defined by Carlyle as “Anarchy *plus* a street constable.”<sup>141</sup>

It must, however, be noticed that in the fifth book of his *Political Economy* Mill gives a rather wide scope to the idea of self-protection, so far relaxing the strictness of *laissez-faire* as to permit of the

<sup>139</sup> *Autobiography*, p. 250.

<sup>140</sup> *Liberty*, p. 6.

<sup>141</sup> *Latter-Day Pamphlets*, p. 17.



regulation by Government of education, perpetual contracts, colonization, and scientific experiment.<sup>142</sup> The *Political Economy* was written eleven years before the essay *On Liberty*; but whether the author meant, in his later expression, to modify his former views, is rather a difficult question to answer.

With regard to the means by which the object of the state was to be realized, Mill's main plan was to advocate the maintenance and improvement of representative government. The outlines of the system had been sketched by Bentham many years before, and elaborated by James Mill in his *Essay on Government*. The improvements suggested by Mill himself seem to be connected by the thread of a purpose which runs through them all—the improvement of the moral tone of the community, and, thereby, of the government. Towards this object was directed his uncompromising hostility to the introduction of the ballot, to the “delegate” theory, to the placing of unlimited power in the hands of majorities. In these three articles he was of course opposed to the orthodox Radicals of the day. The ballot was included in the famous “Six Points” of the Charter, it was persistently advocated by the most energetic of the Radical leaders, and was, as every one knows, eventually carried. Mill's treatment of the question is characteristic of his thoroughness. He points out the inconsistency of giving a man a vote on the ground that he is fitted to use it for

<sup>142</sup> *Political Economy*, book v., vol. ii., pp. 576—end.



honourable purposes, and then allowing him to employ a method of voting which affords scope for unlimited indulgence of unworthy motives. He saw that the conditions under which a tenant or workman required protection against his landlord or employer, other than the protection afforded by the possession of the vote itself, were rapidly passing away. Even in 1860 a good tenant was far too valuable to be ejected on political grounds. Mill saw too that the ballot gave room for still worse bribery than the open system, by making it possible for the elector to accept bribes from both parties. And he dreaded the moral effect of the institution upon the electors.<sup>143</sup> How true his forebodings have proved will be pointed out further on.

In the second point he was also opposed to that powerful section of the Radical party of which Mr. Bright was the spokesman. It was the contention of this school that members were sent to Parliament to register the votes of their constituents, that is, of the majority, or supposed majority, of them. This theory, if carried out, would simply place the government of the country in the hands of those least fitted to wield it, in the great mass of the uninstructed. In other words, it would involve the government of the wise by the ignorant. Mill's view of the duties of an electorate was that it was to choose its governors, not to govern. For a recognition of honesty and ability little education is required, but to judge of the competing merits of

<sup>143</sup> *Representative Government*, cap. x.

two or more rival policies a man must possess special skill and knowledge.

Upon the subject of minorities, Mill held firmly to the view that a government which merely represents the views of a majority is not a truly representative government,<sup>144</sup> is, in fact, a class-government with a colour of democracy in it. The means he proposed for securing the effective representation of minorities were, principally, a cumulative vote for persons of superior education, and a scheme, something like that developed by Mr. Hare, for a system of non-local constituencies.

It seems to me that this thread of improvement in the moral tone of democracies is also the link by which to connect Mill's advocacy of the political claims of women with the rest of his philosophy. Doubtless his mind was ardently affected by what seemed to him a flagrant example of cruel injustice. His famous essay on *The Subjection of Women* is animated by a tone far warmer than that which usually marks his writings. He believed that the differences in the legal positions of men and women were the occasion of grievous practical suffering to all women, but more especially to those whose circumstances required them to support themselves by the exercise of their business abilities. The peculiar composition of Mill's nature, and his purely intellectual conception of justice, may possibly have inclined him to take an exaggerated view of the case; certainly it seems hard for any one who considers the conditions of modern

<sup>144</sup> *Representative Government*, p. 133.

politics to get up a very strong feeling of wrong at being excluded from the franchise.

But in his treatise Mill also lays great stress on the moral influences which would in his view flow from the equalisation of the conditions of the sexes. The existing differences he considers to be harmful in their operation upon the characters of men and women, depriving society at large of an immense amount of intellectual and moral force, producing a totally false impression with regard to the actual capabilities of either sex, and hindering the natural gravitation of faculties towards their suitable occupations. Notwithstanding these social considerations, the author of the essay, throughout what is evidently an exceptionally deliberate work, shows himself to be a thorough individualist, and the point in which his arguments appear to be weakest is on the question of the social necessity of maintaining unequal, or, at any rate, dissimilar conditions. The only other criticism which it seems necessary to make here is, that in tracing the origin and growth of the existing arrangements,<sup>145</sup> Mill does not appear to have been aware of the primitive polyandrous states of society, which have since been explained by various writers on the subject of sociology, as, for instance, by Mr. McLennan. It ought to be noticed that in the *Autobiography*<sup>146</sup> Mill expressly claims to have held the substance of the view developed in *The Subjection of Women* before becoming acquainted with Mrs.

<sup>145</sup> *Subjection of Women*, pp. 8, 9.

<sup>146</sup> *Autobiography*, p. 244, note.

Taylor, though he admits his indebtedness to her for the working out of the principle. The article published in Mill's name in the *Westminster Review* of July 1851, upon the same subject, is avowedly the work of Mrs. Taylor.<sup>147</sup>

The object which Mill set before himself in the *Political Economy* is clearly stated in the preface to the book. The treatise of Adam Smith, the foundation of modern English political economy, had been a work dealing with its special subject as a branch of general social philosophy ; its pages were filled with matter which did not strictly belong to economic science, but which bore more or less directly upon it. In one place, for instance, Adam Smith diverges into a history of European education.

The work had both gained and lost by this method. Mr. Bagehot has pointed out<sup>148</sup> the fact that of the two greatest English writers on political economy before Mill, the one, Adam Smith, who as an university professor and man of theory might have been expected to have dealt with his subject in an abstract way, has in fact given us a work abounding in happy illustration from past and present circumstances, and full of practical detail ; while Ricardo, the man of business and member of Parliament, has produced a book almost repulsive in its scientific hardness and remoteness from life. Business men, the practitioners of political economy, read Adam Smith, but will not read Ricardo.

<sup>147</sup> *Dissertations and Discussions*, vol. ii., p. 411.

<sup>148</sup> *Economic Studies*, ed. 1880, p. 151.

But if Adam Smith's work gains in popularity by the method adopted, it loses in scientific value. The multitude of allusions and details encumber the mind of the author, and prevent him working out his principles to their full extent. Accordingly, as a scientific work, his book had become in many points obsolete by Mill's time, though it will never lose its historical interest.

It was Mill's object to produce a work which should combine the practicality of the *Wealth of Nations* with the correcter scientific matter of the later writers. There can be no doubt that he has succeeded admirably. The *Political Economy* is a work full of interest for every intelligent reader, economist or not. The frequent applications of principle to existing circumstances, not merely by way of illustration, but as part of the original scheme, prevent anything like a feeling of difficulty arising in the mind of the reader, except perhaps in some of the more abstruse chapters on the subject of money. The amount of knowledge on auxiliary subjects displayed is so great as to give the work a secondary value distinct from its primary importance.

On the other hand, by the testimony of universal respect among those best qualified to judge, the scientific value of the *Political Economy* is equal to its attractiveness. Mill did not claim originality for his matter; the principal merit of his work is the admirable skill with which the conclusions of others are woven together, and the result stated with scientific accuracy and yet with literary clearness

and grace. It is needless to say, in speaking of a scientific work which has attained its fortieth year, that its doctrines are here and there subjected to criticism. For instance, the importance which Mill attached to the subject of the distribution of wealth is now generally considered to belong more properly to that of consumption. And Mill's theory of the wages fund, a theory which was probably influenced largely by his appreciation of Malthusianism, has been of late severely criticized, in a popular form by Mr. Henry George, and in a scientific spirit by Professor Walker. Nevertheless, the work remains still a standard guide to the subject; every English student is advised by his teachers to read it thoroughly, and the latest authority pronounces that the somewhat sweeping criticisms propounded by more modern economists, such as Professor Cairnes and Mr. Stanley Jevons, are not on the whole justified.

Lastly, we come to Mill's labours on the subject of logic. It is in this field, perhaps, that he shows to best advantage; the nature of the topic is calculated to draw out to the utmost his unrivalled patience and power of abstraction, his searching self-examination and distrust of generalities. The greater part of his well-known treatise is a summary, complete and critical, of the labours of his predecessors, and exhibits the same features which have been noticed in the consideration of the *Political Economy*. But the theory of the syllogism in the second book is a contribution of an



original kind, and though it seems to fail in leading to the conclusion which its author propounds, it is, apart from that consideration, a discovery of great interest and value.

It is in the last book, however, of the *Logic* that the author shows the real powers of his mind. It has been suggested that this book forms the most valuable part of the work. It may now be questioned whether it is not the most valuable of all Mill's writings, the only point which detracts from its worth as an evidence of his powers being the fact that for at least one of its most interesting features he is indebted to Comte.<sup>149</sup>

The idea of the book is the application of the methods of physical science to the treatment of the moral sciences. Hitherto these had been mainly deductive. It is true that Hume, in his *Treatise of Human Nature*, had suggested the alternative,—had, in fact, thrown out the plan of a somewhat similar work to that of Mill. But this side of Hume's labours had not been followed up. Many studies, which attracted much attention and absorbed the energy of numerous scholars, were in a merely chaotic state, owing to the want of scientific arrangement. Histories, for instance, were written from the point of view of the writer's prepossessions, or were so destitute of all method as to be unworthy of serious study. It was Mill's desire to change all this by a proof of the possibility of inductive moral sciences.

<sup>149</sup> *Autobiography*, p. 210.

He begins by setting boldly out in the search for a science of human nature. The material side of human nature had, of course, long been the subject of scientific study as the matter of physiology and its branches. But Mill proposed to extend the process to the mental side, placing the inductive science of psychology side by side with that of physiology as the parent-stem of numerous branches, the starting-point for a thorough investigation of the laws of man regarded as a spiritual being. The question whether psychology would ultimately prove to be, as some philosophers asserted, itself a branch of physiology, he preferred to leave open, maintaining that, in its undecided condition, it did not interfere with his plans.

From the conclusions of this fundamental inductive science of psychology, which had already been propounded by his father, and was very shortly to receive further treatment at the hands of Professor Bain and Mr. Herbert Spencer, Mill proposed to deduce another science, the science of the formation of character. We have seen that it was one of the essentials of his philosophy that the law of causation held in the matter of human conduct just as completely as in the course of external events. Consequently, if we could know the working of the laws of mind, and the nature of the events upon which they operate, we could trace the formation and development of the character, both of the individual and the community. Owing to the complex nature of the phenomena, this science of *ethology* (for

so Mill proposed to call it) would not itself be capable of being made an inductive science. An attempt to construct it on inductive principles would lead to mere empiricism, but, the general law being deduced from the conclusions of psychology, its truth could be tested by verification *à posteriori*.

Upon the sciences of psychology and ethology, the sciences of individual life, Mill then proceeded to build the science of man in society. Hitherto this subject had been treated as an art, hardly as a science. The object of most writers had been to frame a system of precepts for the guidance of rulers, not to ascertain the actual sequences of social phenomena. The result had not been such as to bring credit to the subject, for it was easy to see that, in their philosophical views, these writers were influenced mainly by their own prepossessions.

To one who held Mill's view of the doctrine of necessity, the only difficulty in the way of the evolution of a science of sociology lay in the complex character of the phenomena involved. This complexity led him to conclude that the social science must of necessity be deductive, although founded upon the inductive science of psychology. But even after this determination the difficulties were formidable. "If all the resources of science are not sufficient to enable us to calculate *à priori* with complete precision the mutual action of three bodies gravitating towards one another, it may be judged with what prospect of success we should endeavour to calculate the result of the conflicting

tendencies which are acting in a thousand different directions and promoting a thousand different changes at a given instant in a given society.”<sup>150</sup> It must be noticed, however, that Mill’s individualistic view of society cleared away for him one great difficulty which obstructs the efforts of socialist philosophers even to imagine a social science. “The laws of the phenomena of society are, and can be, nothing but the laws of the actions and passions of human beings united together in the social state. . . . Men are not, when brought together, converted into another kind of substance, with different properties. . . . Human beings in society have no properties but those which are derived from, and may be resolved into, the laws of the nature of individual man.”<sup>151</sup> It is needless to observe that there are, and have long been, philosophers of eminence who do not take this view of society.

For dealing with the phenomena of society as conceived by Mill, there are two methods, both consisting of a double process of deduction and verification. The first, the discovery of Comte, consists of generalizations from history, “verified, not originally suggested, by deduction from the laws of human nature.”<sup>152</sup> This process Mill conceived to be most suitable for the study of sociology regarded as embracing the totality of social conditions. Society might be considered as in the

<sup>150</sup> *Logic*, book vi., cap. ix., § 1.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, cap. vii., § 1.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, cap. ix., § 1.

momentary condition of equilibrium, in which case the necessary generalizations were obtained by an analysis of a large number of concurrent states, and then explained by reference to the laws of psychology. To the body of conclusions thus evolved Comte gave the name of *Social Statics*. Or society might be regarded as in a continual condition of evolution, and then the generalizations to be obtained would consist of rules of sequence observed in a study of history in the ordinary sense of the term, the difficulty in dealing with the enormous number of the forces always at work being solved by the attention being confined to that one which, in Comte's view, was a sure key to the rest,—the progress of "the speculative faculties of mankind, including the nature of the beliefs which by any means they have arrived at concerning themselves and the world by which they are surrounded."<sup>153</sup> These generalizations, when corrected by reference to psychological laws, would form a body of *Social Dynamics*, which, combined with the body of knowledge known as *Social Statics*, would form the science of General Sociology, the key to the explanation of the phenomena of universal history.

But, highly as he valued this historical method as the true process for investigating the problems of general sociology, Mill insisted upon the desirability of a use of the Direct Deductive Method as the means for a satisfactory study of departmental

<sup>153</sup> *Logic*, book vi., chap. x., § 7.



sociology. In his view there were many branches of sociology which could be most advantageously studied apart from the general conditions of society in which they were imbedded. Thus Political Economy, involved as it undoubtedly is in an extremely complex state of social conditions, may nevertheless be abstracted for the purposes of scientific study with great advantage, provided only that the real conditions of its existence be kept ultimately in mind. Similarly with the case of Political Ethology, or the science of the aptitudes and capabilities of the human mind for particular forms of government.

These departmental studies are, according to Mill, best carried on by means of the method which begins with direct deduction from psychological laws, and then verifies its conclusions by observation and experiment. Thus, it is a psychological fact that the human mind is capable of feelings social and individual, of which the individual tend always strongly to predominate. In the performance, therefore, of an occupation at once social and individual, such as the carrying on of trade or the conduct of government, it might be expected that the individual interests of the agent would be apt to override his sense of social duties. To make this conclusion a reliable rule for the guidance of investigation, or a safe foundation for the construction of a theory, it will be necessary to verify it by an extensive observation of phenomena. Do the individual interests of men



engaged in business or politics, as a general rule, actually tend to obliterate their sense of social duties ?

Here must end my feeble sketch of the intensely interesting contents of the sixth book of the *Logic*. Some attempt to estimate the results which have flowed from the work in the forty years which have elapsed since it made its appearance must hereafter be made. At the present moment one thing only remains to be offered as a criticism. The thoroughly individualistic conception of the whole scheme is obvious. Psychology, the science upon which, according to Mill, the whole of the moral sciences must ultimately rest, is with him the science of the minds of men, not of the mind of man. He works from the individual to society, not from society to the individual. This fact is really the key to the whole of Mill's intellectual character. It explains his devotion to the inductive method, which is a building up of particulars into generals, his condemnation of intuition, which is the communication of the individual with the universe, his adhesion to *laissez-faire* and the rights of minorities, his fondness for logic, which, at any rate as at present conceived, is an individual process; and it largely accounts also for his advocacy of the claims of women. There was not a shade of transcendentalism in him ; the few really great thoughts which are to be found in his pages, of which his well-known estimate of the functions of labour in the physical universe is an admirable

specimen,<sup>154</sup> are the results of hard logical proof. The rarefied mountain-air which blows upon us as we read the words of such men as Emerson never visits the student of Mill; but in place of it we have the perfection of ordinary climate, in which the hygienic conditions are in exact order, and there is no need of spectacles to screen the eyes from the glare of the sun.

<sup>154</sup> *Political Economy*, vol. i., p. 32.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE POTTER'S CLAY.

WE have seen that in position and attitude towards the world Carlyle and Mill stand wide apart. The one is the solitary prophet of a forgotten creed ; the voice of one crying in the wilderness. The other is the expounder, elaborator, and reformer of a doctrine which has already taken firm hold on men's minds.

In qualities, no less than in attitude, have we also seen that they differed. Carlyle is the poet, the orator, the artist, the intuitionist, the transcendentalist, the German ; Mill, the logician, the pleader, the man of science, the experimental philosopher, the rationalist, the Frenchman. In everything they are opposites, or, as one would prefer to think, complements of each other.

Finally, we have seen that the teaching of the two men was, in appearance at least, wholly different. Carlyle's message is simple, "Let duty be your first aim, your work your worship ; be

reverent, be true ; be righteousness your ideal. 'Love not Pleasure ; love God. This is the EVERLASTING YEA.'" In other terms Mill. "Improve your machinery of politics and education ; study the interests of yourself and the world ; examine everything, be satisfied with nothing that you cannot prove ; be the General Happiness your supreme test of right and wrong." If we might sum up the difference of teaching in a single phrase, we should say : Carlyle is concerned with the improvement of *character*, Mill with the improvement of *conduct*.

We have now to attempt some estimate of the effect produced upon the world by the teaching of the two men whom we have been considering. And we may obtain a certain appearance of method, if we first enquire what, from our knowledge of human nature, we might suppose the impressions to have been, and then ascertain by reference to history whether our expectations have been fulfilled.

The working lives of Carlyle and Mill fall within the period of thirty-five years between 1833 and 1868. In the first of these years *Sartor* began to appear in the pages of *Fraser*, and in the last Mill retired from parliamentary life to the solitude of Avignon, Carlyle having already bidden farewell to the world in the Edinburgh speech of 1866. It is from this period and the few years which preceded it, therefore, that both drew the colour of their thoughts, and it is necessary to bear in

mind the character of the time, if we would understand their relations with it.

We considered, in our study of Carlyle, the leading social and political conditions of the age. There can be no doubt of Carlyle's profound dissatisfaction with it. His whole meaning lies in that dissatisfaction. But it must be pointed out that the ennui which Carlyle saw was not a fiction of his own imagination. Mill, writing in 1836, in his optimistic days, says :—

“There has crept over the refined classes, over the whole class of gentlemen in England, a moral effeminacy, an inaptitude for every kind of struggle. They shrink from all effort, from everything which is troublesome and disagreeable. . . . They cannot undergo labour, they cannot brook ridicule, they cannot brave evil tongues: they have not the hardihood to say an unpleasant thing to any one whom they are in the habit of seeing, or to face, even with a nation at their back, the coldness of some little coterie which surrounds them.”<sup>155</sup>

It is pretty clear, then, that Carlyle and Mill were agreed about the virtues of the aristocracy. The middle classes were in full fervour of their worship of the god Respectability, and the lower classes were represented by Chartism. Mr. Tennyson (as he then was) is so admirable a reflection of the feelings of his generation, that we may reasonably expect to find in his writings some evidence to guide us. Let us look at this picture, drawn in 1855, by a professed pessimist certainly, but presumably with some reference to facts :—

<sup>155</sup> *Civilization*, “Dissertations,” vol. i., p. 180.

Why do they prate of the blessings of Peace? We have  
made them a curse,  
Pickpockets, each hand lusting for all that is not its own;  
And lust of gain, in the spirit of Cain, is it better or worse  
Than the heart of the citizen hissing in war on his own  
hearthstone?

But these are the days of advance, the works of the men of  
mind,

When who but a fool would have faith in a tradesman's  
ware or his word?

Is it peace or war? Civil war, as I think, and that of a kind  
The viler, as underhand, not openly bearing the sword.

\* \* \* \* \*

Peace sitting under her olive, and slurring the days gone by,  
When the poor are hovell'd and hustled together, each sex,  
like swine,

When only the ledger lives, and when only not all men lie;  
Peace in her vineyard—yes!—but a company forges the  
wine.

And the vitriol madness flushes up in the ruffian's head,  
Till the filthy by-lane rings to the yell of the trampled  
wife,

And chalk, and alum, and plaster, are sold to the poor for  
bread,

And the spirit of murder works in the very means of life,

And Sleep must lie down arm'd, for the villainous centre-bits  
Grind on the wakeful ear in the hush of the moonless  
nights,

While another is cheating the sick of a few last gasps, as he  
sits

To pestle a poison'd poison behind his crimson lights.

When a Mammonite mother kills her babe for a burial fee,  
And Timour Mammon grins on a pile of children's bones,  
Is it peace or war? Better war, loud war by land and by  
sea,

War with a thousand battles, and shaking a hundred  
thrones." <sup>156</sup>

And such, only braver, is the tone all through the

<sup>156</sup> *Maud*, part i., I., stanzas vi.—xii.



works of the Corn-Law Rhymer, Ebenezer Elliott, who, true man as he was, spoke of things as he saw them. Mr. Matthew Arnold too, criticizing the latter years of our period, finds them tending gravely towards anarchy, the ideal of human conduct being "Doing as One Likes."<sup>157</sup> Well, it is very difficult to tell if one age is better or worse than others. To Macaulay the times seemed pleasant enough, and Mr. Roebuck, before the repeal of the Corn Laws, could invite the Sheffield cutlers to "consider our unrivalled happiness." But on the whole it appears that the minds of thoughtful people misgave them much during the years 1833—1868.

As Carlyle himself pointed out, it was only the middle part of the body social that had anything earnest or satisfied in it. The middle classes were absorbed in the worship of Mammon and Respectability, they were making money with all their might. Political Economy was their creed, and a fortune their heaven. It could not be expected that they should pay very much attention to unorthodox teachers.

But of the extremes—the one torpid, the other feverishly dissatisfied—what should we expect their conduct to be?

If the victim of ennui have sufficient strength to make an effort to deliver himself, he is generally advised, he generally feels, that he ought to get

<sup>157</sup> *Culture and Anarchy* (written in 1869), 3rd edition, pp. 50-61.

*something to do.* It does not occur to him that the tendency to ennui is the result of a vicious disposition, of selfishness long indulged, of evil habits and excesses, of a low standard of life in general. He generally attributes his unhappiness to external causes, and catches eagerly at any suggestion which expends its effect upon them.

So too the feverish and excited patient takes refuge from himself in temporary activity. The best thing he can possibly do is to strive after calmness, to avoid all occasions of agitation, to cease experimenting upon this and that medicine. But to these remedies he does not incline. He will try everything; in something there may be relief, and at least it is a relief to be occupied.

Both these extremes then, we might expect, would accept far more readily the teaching of Mill than that of Carlyle. People have always found Carlyle "vague," and so in one sense he was. He had no "Morrison's Pill" for the regeneration of mankind. He did not believe that "the present wretched education and wretched social arrangements" were the only bars to universal happiness. With both these classes Mill would have the early success which an empiricist always enjoys.

But on another ground we might expect the effect of Mill's teaching to be the more rapid. His philosophy was framed upon a consideration of man *as he is*, Carlyle's upon a view of man *as he ought to be*. Looking at the world from a positivist standpoint, Mill strove to guide and elevate the tendencies which

he saw to be actually existing; possibly he had not the mental force necessary to separate himself from the feelings in which he shared, and to enable him to contemplate alternatives. His philosophy was, to a certain extent, the supplement of the practices he saw around him. Consequently his teaching came into no violent collision with established tendencies and modes of thought. He was truly orthodox, he always inclined to the opinion of the majority.

Carlyle, on the other hand, was in violent opposition to the tendencies of the age. The "Spirit of Progress" he openly mocked at; Mammonism he despised; the well-fed optimism of the *Edinburgh Review* seemed to him a hollow sham. He flung down his challenge against the whole intellectual world. On these grounds, also, we should expect that the influence of Mill would be early felt, while that of Carlyle would fail to appear for some time.

But, from what we know of human nature, we might conjecture that the original verdict of the world might come to be reversed. The appeal to the understanding may be successful at first, and understanding goes sometimes a long way. There have been men, such as Gibbon, with whom the intellectual faculties always remain a sufficient guide, in whom passion and enthusiasm appear to be non-existent. But such cases are comparatively rare. In most instances the man turns away from what he understands to what he feels. His real beliefs are not

things that can be discussed or put into language ; they are above logical expression, they are transcendental. In Mill's posthumous essays there are traces which seem to show that even he felt this. And certainly with most men, including those who, by general consent, are accounted amongst the world's noblest, the need of some ideal is always felt. It was Mazzini's expressed conviction that no great cause was ever achieved without the help of heroes who said in their hearts, "It is the will of God." Put into poetical language, such a craving is for Shelley—

The devotion to something afar  
From the sphere of our sorrow.

"Wouldst thou plant for Eternity," says Carlyle, "then plant into the deep infinite faculties of man . . . wouldst thou plant for Year and Day, then plant into his shallow superficial faculties, his self-love and Arithmetical Understanding."<sup>158</sup> And so we should expect that, after some time, especially if the age were one of fading ideals, the world would turn towards one who held up the prospect of a more exalted faith. Let us see if we can verify these *à priori* conclusions.

It will, of course, be necessary to confine our observation to England. Supposing the question of competency to be satisfactorily solved, we should exceed all reasonable limits if we examined the conditions of foreign countries with care sufficient to warrant the probability of any conclusions we might

<sup>158</sup> *Sartor*, p. 155.

draw. And Mr. Matthew Arnold has warned us against supposing that the lights of our small firmament are discerned in the greater heaven of Continental thought. Carlyle is undoubtedly known in Germany, as a historian and something more. Our friend Meyer, in the last edition of his invaluable little *Hand-Lexikon*, speaks of him as—"Ein Autor von originellem Charakter, eifriger Apostel des Evangeliums der Arbeit, als Historiker Anhänger des Heroenkultus; seine Sprache geistvoll und witzig, aber oft dunkel und barock."<sup>159</sup> (It will be observed that the good Meyer is not exact in his discernment of the apostolic functions, as we have been.) And in the still later edition of his *Konversation's-Lexikon* he will so far commit himself as to say that—"Ohne jemals im vulgarem Sinn des Worts populär zu sein, hat doch kein neuerer Schriftsteller auf die Litteratur, vielleicht auf die ganze geistige Entwicklung seines Vaterlandes so sehr eingewirkt wie Carlyle."<sup>160</sup> We may also remember with pride the letter and Order of Merit from Prince Bismarck, and the birthday address from German professors, who are assuredly not apt to over-estimate the merits of English writers, even when the latter have written German histories. In truth Carlyle's *Friedrich* is a work of European reputation, and were it not that we were here concerned with him rather as a direct teacher than as a historian, we might make great capital out of the fact that even to German readers Carlyle transcends

<sup>159</sup> Meyer's *Hand-lexikon*, subtit. "*Carlyle*."

<sup>160</sup> Meyer's *Konversation's Lexikon*., *ibid*.



the ideal of thoroughness. Of Mill too we may affirm that he is known, both in France and Germany, as a philosopher who has had his day. His works have been translated, and M. Littré has written upon the English reflection of the true Comtian sun.

But it is with England that we must concern ourselves. Here Mill's theory of things certainly appears at first sight to be in the ascendant. When he died, he was, in almost all cases, the ultimate appeal of the Radical party, who by their superior energy have since made the history of Parliamentary politics. His reforms have been carried out, or at least attempts made towards them. His policy has been embodied in the Irish Land Acts of 1870 and 1881, and has been extended to England by the Agricultural Holdings Act. His advocacy of the claims of women has resulted in the three Married Women's Property Acts and the separation clauses of the Divorce Acts. A small instalment even in the direction of the representation of minorities was paid by the Reform Act of 1867, which introduced "three-cornered" constituencies. And if the Radicals have been deaf to Mill's arguments against the maintenance of the ballot, it is not for want of evidence to support them. The inquiry of 1881 ought to have dissipated all theories of the purity of the ballot for ever. Mill's advocacy of the cause of Political Economy has led to the more enlightened teaching of the subject. Chairs of Political Economy have been established at the Universities. America is taking up the study with interest, and all the professors of the science



look to Mill as the first of the moderns. The famous sixth book of the *Logic* has done that which its great prototype, the *Treatise of Human Nature*, failed to do, and we have had a succession of thinkers, such as Mr. Herbert Spencer, Mr. Bagehot, Mr. Buckle, and Professor Seeley, who, if they do not owe their ideas to the *Logic*, at least work upon the same lines as those which it suggests. Finally, Mill's school of thought has been represented on its most attractive side by one who divides with Thackeray the supreme honours of the modern world of fiction. As Comte had his Balzac, so Mill and the scientific school have had their George Eliot, who has poetized their discoveries and done much to make them popular. And if the Radicals claim Mr. Swinburne, as a republican poet, for their ranks, the claim cannot perhaps be denied; though Mr. Swinburne's republics differ as widely from the Radical ideal of universal suffrage and a single representative chamber as do Walt Whitman's theories of democracy from those on which his own presidential Government is based.

There is often no better way of testing the effect which a man's life has produced than by considering the characters of his children. We see there how the paternal influence survives amid the new circumstances of a younger generation, modified and coloured by them, but retaining its old expression. The place which in 1860 was occupied by Mill is now filled by Mr. Herbert Spencer. Our scientific young men now look up to the author of the *Data of*

*Ethics* as the scientific young men of 1860 looked up to the author of *Liberty*. Never was a clearer case of philosophic inheritance. The high priesthood of the temple of science has descended from Mill to Spencer. If we look for a moment at the latter's Confession of Faith, we shall be able to see what modifications of the older creed time has brought with it.

The leading idea of Mr. Herbert Spencer's philosophy is the unity of life and its development by evolution. This is a supreme, unalterable law, and by it all things stand or fall. "The wages of sin is death," Mr. Herbert Spencer has understood to mean "whatever tends to produce death is sin." The perfect state is that in which the conditions are completely adapted to the full development of life, and the test of conduct is its tendency to produce that state. Now that which most surely tends to promote and enlarge life is pleasure of all kinds, and, on the contrary, all kinds of pain result in different degrees of injury to the development of life. Therefore the supreme test of conduct is also its tendency to produce pleasure or pain. The absolutely right action is that which results in unmixed pleasure, the relatively right that which on the whole produces more pleasure than pain; the absolutely wrong, that of which the results are wholly painful, and the relatively wrong that from which there results a surplus of pain over pleasure.<sup>161</sup>

So far at least we can trace the genesis clearly.

<sup>161</sup> Herbert Spencer, *Data of Ethics*, passim.

Mill must have had a presentiment of the doctrine so earnestly preached by Mr. Herbert Spencer,—the doctrine that the laws of the physical and spiritual worlds work in harmony by the same methods, making life one whole,—or he would hardly have insisted so strongly on the application of physical methods to the study of moral sciences. It is true that the evolution theory is not fully avowed in his writings ; but the laws of association, as applied to the mental conditions by the school of psychologists to which he owed allegiance, bring us very near to the same idea. The maxim of Von Humboldt, prefixed to the essay *On Liberty*, might serve without much criticism as the watchword of the *Data of Ethics*. It does not do to attempt too close definitions of the positions of philosophers ; no one really understands them but themselves, and outsiders get into trouble if they meddle with such mysteries. Yet one might almost feel tempted to frame the proposition, that as Comte is to Mill, so is Mill to Mr. Herbert Spencer.

For the agreement does not stop at speculation. Mr. Spencer is also a champion of Representative Government. It is true that he has done rather a rash thing in defence of it. It may be said that for a man of eminent critical ability to begin his defence of an institution by collecting all the weapons he can lay hands on to put into his adversary's grasp, is more generous, perhaps, than wise. The eye of the critic is like the eye of the hunter. He begins to knock down a few head of game, just by way of trial, and then the instinct grows upon him, and he becomes

more deadly with each shot, and he cannot leave off till the forest is cleared and the dead lie in heaps around him. And such a course, if the forest happens to be his own hunting-ground, is apt to lead to awkward consequences. Mr. Herbert Spencer has unmasked a terrible battery of guns against Representative Government, and has succeeded in flatly demolishing all the proud towers thereof. He shows irrésistibly that under a ruling body composed of many units harmonious government is not to be expected; that such bodies do not attract men of intelligence and character; that, on the contrary, their ranks are filled by schemers of all kinds, who have their personal advantages, often inconsistent with those of the community, principally in view; that such governments tend almost irresistibly to become extravagant; that their ignorance is generally extreme. So far all goes smoothly enough; except that the believer in Representative Government must begin to think this a strange kind of champion. But when the other side of the question is to be presented, and Mr. Herbert Spencer has to show that this dismantled castle is still a very good comfortable mansion, suited to modern requirements, then he is not quite so effective. He talks a good deal about the iniquities of tyrants (rather a juvenile theme); indulges in a tirade against "hero-worship,"—from which it appears that in Mr. Spencer's view anybody may be recognized as a "hero" if he be strong enough; and proceeds finally to assert that representative government would be a very good government if it would

only confine itself to what Mr. Spencer regards as its proper limits,—a moderation of which, as he himself woefully admits, it never appears to be capable.<sup>162</sup> Still Mr. Herbert Spencer must be reckoned a follower of Mill in his advocacy of representative government, and, practically, a follower on the same path.

In his adherence to individualism and insistence on *laissez-faire*, Mr. Herbert Spencer even outstrips his predecessor. His individualism is that of Godwin rather than that of Mill. He will have government do nothing but administer justice, *i.e.*, protect its subjects from external and internal aggression. This is the only task for which government is fitted in an advanced state of society, and in proportion as social conditions become more complex, the more hopeless it will be for a government to attempt to do anything more. "Increasing ability to perform its true duty involves increasing inability to perform all other kinds of action."<sup>163</sup> This is a law of that progress which results in the specialization of functions, of which the physiological division of labour is an example.

We have seen that Mr. Herbert Spencer regards the tendency to produce happiness as the ultimate test of conduct. In this view he may seem to come very near to utilitarianism as Mill understood it, and were it not that he has subjected the utilitarian theory to what is perhaps the severest criticism it has ever undergone,<sup>164</sup> we might have fallen into the error of

<sup>162</sup> *Representative Government*, "Essays," vol. ii., p. 163.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 208.

<sup>164</sup> *Data of Ethics*, pp. 220—237.



regarding him as a subscriber to its truth. Clearly he has shown that the *distribution* of happiness is impossible, in the ordinary sense of the word. Happiness is not "something that can be cut up into parts and handed round."<sup>165</sup> But the utilitarian idea is not only the distribution of happiness, but the production of happiness. And Mr. Spencer seems to have supposed that Mill recommended the pursuit of the general happiness as a practical rule of conduct, while, as we have seen, Mill abandoned that view before he wrote the *Utilitarianism*. In fact, the whole of the criticism seems to be actuated by a fear that the adoption of utilitarian doctrines would lead eventually to ascetic altruism, a result which is the special object of Mr. Spencer's aversion. No wonder that Mill, in whose lifetime some of these criticisms were published, should have failed to find the reason for them, and that Mr. Spencer himself should "object to being considered an opponent of Utilitarianism."<sup>166</sup>

It is in his views upon the subject of intuition that Mr. Herbert Spencer really differs most from Mill. The latter, as we have seen, regarded with abhorrence "the notion that truths external to the mind may be known by intuition or consciousness." And it has also been pointed out that Mr. Spencer, accepting the doctrine of association of ideas, even pushing it still farther by his application of the principle of evolution, on that very ground gives to intuitions, as the inherited results of ages of observation and experience,

<sup>165</sup> *Data of Ethics*, p. 222.

<sup>166</sup> *Utilitarianism*, p. 93, note.



a very high place in the armoury of scientific discovery. In fact, he argues that observation would be impossible if the truth of consciousness were not postulated. "The testimony of experience is given only through memory ; and its worth depends wholly on the trustworthiness of memory. Is it, then, that the trustworthiness of memory is less open to doubt than the immediate consciousness that two quantities must be unequal if they differ from a third quantity in unequal degrees ? This can scarcely be alleged."<sup>167</sup>

But for all this difference, the conclusions of the two thinkers mainly agree. Mill rejects the testimony of consciousness, supposing it to conflict with the testimony of experience ; Mr. Spencer admits it as the only rational foundation on which the testimony of experience can be accepted. "It is in the interests of the Experience-Hypothesis that Mr. Mill opposes the alleged criterion of truth ; while it is as harmonising with the Experience-Hypothesis, and reconciling it with all the facts, that I defend this criterion."<sup>168</sup> And certainly, if we compare the net results of Mr. Spencer's ethical teaching with what we have seen of Mill's, we shall be tempted to regard the differences as not very substantial. "Hence, recognising in due degrees all the various ethical theories, conduct in its highest form will take as guides innate perceptions of right duly enlightened and made precise by an analytic intelligence ; while conscious that these guides are proximately supreme

<sup>167</sup> *Mill* versus *Hamilton*, "Essays," vol. ii., p. 411.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 413.

solely because they lead to the ultimately supreme end, happiness special and general.”<sup>169</sup> And in order to show how modern criticism has modified Mill's views on the subject of intuition, we may quote one more passage, this time from another influential thinker of the same school, Professor Huxley. “In whichever way we look at the matter, morality is based on feeling, not on reason. . . . The moral law, like the laws of physical nature, rests in the long run upon instinctive intuitions, and is neither more nor less ‘innate’ and ‘necessary’ than they are.”<sup>170</sup> We may venture to conclude then, on the whole, that the most modern scientific thought has, on the subject of ethics at least, not proceeded very far beyond the stage at which Mill left it. His theory of association has been greatly broadened by its expansion into the full current of Darwinian speculation. And an important amendment has been made in his testing process, an amendment, however, more apparent in the machinery of work than in the results which it produces. But otherwise there is not much change to show.

We have seen now how Mr. Herbert Spencer resembles Mill in his wisdom. It may perhaps be admissible to point out that there is also trace of an hereditary weakness in the later thinker. It will be remembered that we accused Mill of a shade of pedantry in his objections to Cæsar and his enthusiasm for the analogy between the “infinitesimal

<sup>169</sup> *Data of Ethics*, pp. 172, 173.

<sup>170</sup> *Hume*, English Men of Letters Series, p. 207.

calculus" and "the corpuscular hypothesis in physics." This same tendency, which very learned scientific men are apt to betray, is to be found in Mr. Herbert Spencer's writings. A single instance will be sufficient to indicate it.

"It is strange," says Mr. Spencer, "that a notion so abstract as that of perfection, or a certain ideal completeness of nature, should ever have been thought one from which a system of guidance can be evolved; as it was in a general way by Plato, and more distinctly by Jonathan Edwards."<sup>171</sup>

Not to have seen the bathos of thus coupling together the great Athenian philosopher and the New England Calvinist divine argues a strange want of humour in the composition of Mr. Herbert Spencer's mind. But it is time that we turn to a hasty glance at the other disciples of Mill's school.

It almost seemed, at one time, as if the brilliant author of *The English Constitution* would eclipse the fame of his predecessor. Written only a few years after Mill's *Representative Government* saw the light, Mr. Bagehot's work manifested a scientific skill equal to that of the older writer, together with a delicate perception of facts and feelings which is hardly found in the pages of Mill. It substituted in the minds of Englishmen, and, to some extent, of Europeans, for the theories of Montesquieu, Delolme, and Blackstone, the true theory of the actual working constitution. It does not, of course, occupy the high ethical ground of the *Representative Government*,

<sup>171</sup> *Data of Ethics*, p. 32.

neither does it take so wide a sweep. But it puts before us the facts as they are, with a vividness which enables us to see clearly the safeguards and the dangers. Since Bagehot wrote, we have heard little of the equally balanced powers, whose equilibrium must be preserved at the risk of political slavery. No government could possibly work so, any more than an army could conquer which had two independent and equally authoritative generals. The English constitution worked in 1867 because the country delegated supreme power for an indefinite period to a small committee of managers, whose decisions were practically absolute. But Bagehot was true at heart to representative government; he endeavoured to improve it; he saw some of its weaknesses, but he was as staunch as Mill himself to the institution. "The practical choice of first-rate nations is between the Presidential Government and the Parliamentary; no State can be first-rate which has not a Government by discussion, and those are the only two existing species of that Government."<sup>172</sup> This is the sentiment of a true positivist, and a positivist Bagehot undoubtedly was. As has been hinted, he came near to eclipsing Mill himself. He wrote on Political Economy, and his productions, fragmentary as they are, bear evidences of the highest order of scientific thought. He wrote a book on the application of physical principles to political societies, in which much of what has since been done in that direction is suggested. We have

<sup>172</sup> Bagehot, *Essays on Parliamentary Reform*, 1883, p. 248.

every reason to judge, from the work he actually accomplished, that in the department of pure mental science he would have been exceptionally successful. Unfortunately for his reputation as a scientific thinker, he had also brilliant literary ability. His *Literary Studies* are some of the most delicious reading in the whole of English criticism. He stands indeed on the very border line between Philistia and Judæa, and it is with regret we find that in his heart of hearts he appears to have enshrined the gods of heathendom. A comfortable fortune, an environment blessed by all the discoveries of science, and an agreeable philosophy of social conventions, seem to him, after all, better worth a man's life than a Quixotic devotion to ideals. But it is just for this reason that he falls inevitably into the ranks of the army of science.

If an early death robbed the world of the fruit which the works of Bagehot had foreshadowed, a similar fate befell the promise of Thomas Buckle. From him we might have expected a complete philosophy of history on positivist lines. He did enough to show in what direction his thoughts lay, and the precocity of his talent led to the hope that time might be given him to succeed in an enterprise which demanded an almost Herculean amount of labour.

Mr. Buckle's death has left the field to another teacher. In suggesting Professor Seeley as a continuer of Mill's work, I do not of course mean to imply that Professor Seeley's views on ethical and



political subjects agree with those of Mill. But it does appear that in his philosophy of history Professor Seeley is working out some of the suggestions contained in the sixth book of the *Logic*. It is true that the key to history is found by Professor Seeley to be not, as Comte suggested and Mill approved, the state of the speculative faculties of mankind from age to age, but the development of the political forms under which they live. This is certainly not the point at which Mill and Professor Seeley touch. But in the application by the latter of the physical method to the study of history, in his favourite illustration of vegetable physiology as the model for the construction of a science of state-forms, we seem to see a strong grasp and determined adaptation of the ideas suggested by the author of the *Logic*.

So far then it appears that, on the speculative side, at least, the tidal wave of thought upon which Mill rode triumphant is showing no signs of reflux. But we must look at the practical side.

Here also, at first sight, we seem to see all things dominated by the same ideas. The extension of the franchise has given a larger circumference than ever to the circle of practical politics. Great newspapers still exist to report the proceedings of "Imperial Parliament," and to spread the light of political knowledge by means of the temperate arguments of leader-writers. It was a happy day for journalism when it was discovered that the exigencies of the party system might be made to serve the



interests of the press ; that by virtue of the pleasing theory that what one party proposes the other must necessarily oppose, two newspapers might be made to grow where only one grew before. The same theory of course simplifies immensely the difficulty which otherwise presents itself as to the production of so much literary matter. The news-columns may be supplied from the Central Press Agency with perfect impartiality ; but it will not do to have all the leaders alike. Happily it is only necessary to remember this one cardinal maxim : That whatever is proposed by a member of the other party, that you must abuse. So the good Radical editor must find in every Conservative proposal a plot to aggrandize the aristocracy at the expense of the people, and the staunch Conservative must discover in every Liberal measure a reckless desire of change, and an unworthy itching to meddle with established rights.

All this works with a great deal of noise, and we have vacation campaigns, with mass-meetings, tremendous oratory, and great applause, ever increasing as the time of dissolution draws nigh. And party-principles extend themselves to municipal and even social affairs, and result in Primrose Leagues, and Reform Clubs, and picnics, and pilgrimages, and the earth seems covered with the machinery of representative government ; and all these things make a very great noise indeed.

But it is necessary to look a little deeper than this. Is representative government really as firmly

fixed as it was twenty years ago? Now the stability of institutions may be guessed from their results, perhaps even better than from their appearance. How then does representative government actually work?

It is surely one of the first requisites of a representative system that it should produce a good representative House. A House of Commons, framed in accordance with English theories, might be said to be good if it possessed either of two important qualities. If it succeeded in attracting the wisest and noblest men in the nation it would be good, as affording a guarantee that the highest skill and probity were applied to the guidance of national affairs. Or again, if it succeeded in faithfully reflecting the shades and currents of real feelings throughout the country, it would be good, as offering an invaluable fund of knowledge to those whose actual business it was to rule the nation, were they themselves members of Parliament or not. The House of Commons which combined these two virtues would, of course, be ideally good; for it would prove that the standard of excellence was universal. But such a House is necessarily only ideal; for if all were equally wise and noble, there could be no wisest and noblest.

Does the present House of Commons possess either of these good qualities? The first it can hardly lay claim to. With singularly few exceptions, men of light and leading are not to be found within its walls. How is it possible that they

should be? Will a man of ability and character place himself at the disposal of a Caucus Committee, speak as they bid him, talk platitudes night after night to mass-meetings, swallow all kinds of antiquated formulas, perform all kinds of indirect bribery, to gain a seat from which the first independent speech he makes, the first independent vote he gives, is doomed to hurl him? Will he strive so hardly to enter a scene in which his real knowledge will be despised and refused a hearing, while he is condemned to sit and listen to hours of vapid commonplace applauded to the roof? Is his time of such little value that he should waste it in midnight sittings, while one irreconcilable after another essays the task of carrying brutality to the utmost degree consistent with non-ejection? And all this with the knowledge that his presence is futile, that nothing is really started in Parliament, that no idea has had its birth there for many years, that for all practical purposes Parliament does little more than register the decisions of public opinion, upon which his influence might be far greater from another standpoint? It is true that some men of ability and character do get into Parliament, just as it is true that there are some such men who come to grief in other ways. But the chances are against it.

And so the enlightened turn away in disgust, and leave the House of Commons to men who are neither enlightened nor commonly honest. The House of Commons becomes accessible to anyone who lives in a London suburb, has inherited a

brewery, and has a scheming wife. Young men make Parliament a stepping-stone to some employment, or a means of filling up the time which elapses before they can get professional employment. Men who have made fortunes in some "ungenteel" way buy themselves into the House of Commons with a view, as they think, to increase their social importance. The House becomes less and less what it once was,—a body of men accustomed in their daily lives to some degree of acquaintance with public affairs, and to whom the business of government came, to a certain extent, naturally.

But if representative government does not succeed in filling the House of Commons with the best men in the land, still less does it provide a House which reflects the feelings and wishes of the nation. A man really represents, not the constituency which votes him into his place, but the class of society with which he is identified in spirit and tendencies. Who can say that England is represented in this sense? The aristocracy, which has already a House of its own, is represented to any extent by the hundred and more landowners and younger sons who sit in the Lower House. The professions are over-represented by the retired military and naval officers, by the medical men, and by the barristers, who compose another large section of the Commons, and the clergy are represented by the bishops in the House of Lords. The wealthy manufacturers are represented well enough.

But when we have come so far, we have left unrepresented at least five-sixths of the nation. Who represent the feelings and aspirations of the large class of shopkeepers? By whom is the ever-increasing army of clerks of all grades represented? Or the huge class of agricultural labourers? Or the still huger classes of artizans, mechanics, and unskilled workers? If we make an ample deduction for the few so-called "Labour" candidates, some of whom are emphatically disowned by the great mass of the labouring men, we still have an overwhelming deficit to make up. Is it said that these classes are represented by their superiors, whom they elect to represent them? Consider the case of an eloquent young barrister who goes down to canvass a small country town. He has been supplied by the "Carlton" or the "Reform." His life has been spent at a public school, at an English university, in travelling abroad, and in the streets of London. What does he know about life in a country town? How can he represent the feelings of his constituency, who consist, under the new arrangements, probably of a few country gentlemen, a few professional men, a few farmers, and a very great many small tradesmen and agricultural labourers? Supposing him to endeavour to enter into the life of the place, and really to wish to catch something of the spirit of the locality, how is it possible in the time at his disposal? The private borough system was hardly more fallacious as an attempt at representation than is the carpet-bagging



system, for often the private borough went to a relative of its owner, who had local interests and local knowledge.

Is it a surprising thing that with such a composition the House should fail to do its work? For the last few years it has seemed that it cannot perform even the preliminary task of keeping itself in order. The party-system has divided it into a suicidal pair of combatants, whose insane attempts to cut each other's throats have allowed a third party of irreconcilables to establish themselves in the position of balance-holders. To check the tendency towards anarchy the House has had, by means not the most constitutional, to place in the hands of its own servant arbitrary powers of government,—in other words, in the very heart of the representative system a strong application of despotism has become necessary. Even with this desperate remedy, work can hardly proceed. Every session is prolonged beyond its normal limits, the government of the day is dependent for all hope it has of progress on the forbearance of avowed opponents.

To add to the confusion, the House of Commons has begun to claim functions which no thinking advocate of representative government ever dreamed of assigning to it. It insists on controlling, questioning, and obstructing every act of the executive. It requires every detail of policy to be laid before it, and canvassed and emasculated till all the life is gone from the plan. Every crotchet of a nuisance-hunter is made the basis of an attack on the administration,



by which some one hopes to raise himself into notice. In its eagerness to undertake a task for which it is wholly unfitted, the House of Commons gives up its true functions of legislation and taxation. The legislation, the really important legislation of the session, is prepared by a committee of the executive government, and the House can do little more than make small amendments. Similarly with taxation. Not only are the estimates framed by the executive, which is perhaps necessary, but the means of raising the required sums are practically also determined in the same way. A Prime Minister whose Budget was altered by the House in an important point would probably resign. And then the House would have to vote the Budget of another Prime Minister. In these circumstances, it is not wonderful that the very minimum of real work is produced. The net result was neatly summed up the other day by an observant foreigner, whose other expressions showed that he could appreciate the real conditions of English affairs perhaps better than the English themselves. It seemed to him "*que le mécanisme législatif anglais fait beaucoup plus de bruit et beaucoup moins de besogne qu'autrefois.*"<sup>173</sup> The House of Commons has even ceased to be a satisfactory place for the redress of grievances. When the working-classes want to make their complaints known, they demonstrate in Hyde Park or Trafalgar Square. Probably to every observant person, except its own members, the House

<sup>173</sup> *Journal des Économistes*, August 1887. *Le Mouvement Économique en Angleterre*, p. 242.

of Commons has ceased to appear an important body.

But outside parliament representative government does not fare much better. There is no evidence that the tone of political morality is higher than it was when Carlyle thundered against the sins of electors in the *Latter Day Pamphlets*. Indeed, it would seem from the enquiry of 1881 that things are worse instead of better. The appalling amount of immorality disclosed on that occasion put into the shade, merely by reason of its superior magnitude, the old horrors of Grampound and Gatton; while, for unblushing avowal of political dishonesty, nothing can equal the calmness with which the Corporation of the City of London claims to employ municipal funds for the purpose of influencing elections. And if tangible bribery has not actually increased, intangible bribery was never so great as now. It is the rarest thing to find a candidate who attempts to *guide* his constituency; platform-orators generally say whatever they think will please their audiences best. The speech of an average candidate is a sound to weep over; if he knows the falsehood of what he is saying, he must be an unblushing liar, if he does not, he must be a pitiable sham.

Of the inconsistency and general absurdity of the party-system outside the walls of the House of Commons, it were hardly necessary to speak, except that the persistent exposure of abuses is the best way of getting rid of them. When was ever such

a strange phenomenon seen in human history? One half the world has engaged to look at everything through red spectacles, the other half has made a similar engagement to wear blue. A boy of fifteen is scouted amongst his companions if he has not adopted a juvenile pair of coloured glasses. The mania extends to women, who are thus abdicating the privilege which their aloofness from the mud of politics has bestowed upon them, the privilege of seeing things as they really are. Any person who ventures on such a course is considered dangerous. If it be true, as Sir James Stephen tells us, that legal madness is deviation from a norm, the position of a non-party man may ultimately prove very unpleasant.

It is an easy task to show that any reality which the party-system may have once had has long disappeared. If the party-system is to be real, it must be a system of beliefs, not of caprices. In the days when men believed in their parties the wheel of political fortune did not revolve in the way in which it does now. The Whigs ruled the country from 1714 to the end of the century ; the Tories ruled it from the beginning of the new century till the death of George IV. And yet the Septennial Act had been in force all the time. But within the last fifty years the country has changed its governors no less than seven times, that is to say, if party-allegiance be a matter of belief, the beliefs of the nation have undergone seven revolutions within the space of fifty years. The conclusion we have drawn is the more

merciful of the two. Doubtless the party-system is an admirable safety-valve for the conduct of revolutions, but that does not alter the fact that revolutions are undesirable things.

Happily we are not required to take such a gloomy view. It is unreasonable to expect people to believe in a band of leaders which is ever changing and dissolving, or in a creed which does not exist. Can any philosopher discover what are the distinctive features of the two, or three, or four parties which now divide the nation? It is simply a battle of the Ins and the Outs, with a few faded flags to keep up a semblance of historical traditions; and the only relief from the interminable contest occurs when the spectators interfere and insist on a certain movement.

It is hardly surprising to note that, in these circumstances, the respect for law and order which was once so distinguishing a mark of the Englishman is passing away. London has been for some hours powerless in the hands of a mob. The Home-Rule agitation, which, curiously enough, dates from the very days in which the Irish Land Bill of 1870 was before Parliament, sets at defiance the authority of every Government, its leaders relying with perfect confidence on the Opposition to prevent effective measures. The Tithe-Agitation advocates open resistance to the administration of the law, being unable to make itself effectively heard in a representative Parliament. The crofters of Skye have to be dragooned into order. It hardly seems that

enlightened self-interest tends always in the direction of harmony.

On the other hand, signs are not wanting of a revolt from the school of thought which has played so large a part in the history of the last half-century. The philosophic defenders of positivism and representative government are becoming few in number. Bagehot is dead, Fawcett is dead, Mr. Thorold Rogers and Mr. Goldwin Smith are not the figures they were twenty years ago. Mr. Herbert Spencer has told his tale. The younger school of cultivated Radicals, Mr. Bryce, Mr. Courtney, Sir Charles Dilke, Sir George Trevelyan, do not produce any philosophic justification of their creed. The burden and heat of the day is borne by Mr. John Morley almost alone.

And from the other side the attack grows formidable. It is part of the creed of the Radical school to despise poetry,—surely a very great mistake if the influence which poetry has exerted on politics in all ages be considered. But we will venture to quote a stanza from Mr. Tennyson (the title *will* hang fire) which seems to express something of what the world is now looking for, in spite of Mr. Herbert Spencer's warnings:—

Ah God! for a man with heart, head, hand,  
Like some of the simple great ones gone  
For ever and ever by,  
One strong still man in a blatant land,  
Whatever they call him, what care I?  
Aristocrat, democrat, autocrat—one  
Who can rule and dare not lie.<sup>174</sup>

<sup>174</sup> *Maud*, part i., X., v.

And this thought is expanded into fuller expression in the succeeding *Idylls of the King*, where it is the king's presence and rule that can alone bring peace to a troubled land; while in his latest utterances Tennyson has broken still more with the philosophy whose teachings he once reflected, as he reflects with faithful accuracy each phase of national thought. The very quality which impairs Tennyson's value as a poet renders him invaluable as an index to his age. We should scarcely find a truer picture of English popular thought than that unfolded by a chronological study of his works.

But if Tennyson plays the humbler part of chorus to the English national tragedy, there is one who dominates the stage like the voice of a Cassandra prophesying woe. If the mantle of Mill has fallen upon Mr. Herbert Spencer, the garment of Carlyle has descended upon the shoulders of Mr. Ruskin. With less of grandeur and prophetic imagination than his great predecessor, the author of *Unto this Last* and *Fors Clavigera* is enabled by the surpassing beauty of his words to bring his message more quickly home to his hearers, and to spread it abroad with wider acceptance. By his unrivalled mastery in the criticism of art, Mr. Ruskin has earned a position which he turns to noble use, by showing that the foundation of all true art is a grand morality, a nature high and pure. And his words reach to the ends of the land. No one would question the assertion that by the upper classes Mr. Ruskin's works are eagerly read. But it is



no less true that amongst the very humblest he is a power. It is a fact with which Mr. John Morley and his friends must reckon, that Mr. Ruskin's name would draw a larger and more enthusiastic audience in the east end of London than any that they could bring forward, and this whatever were the subject to be discussed, politics though it were. Mr. Ruskin has never laid himself out to attract popularity. He began life as a member of the Opposition, and he has ever remained an Ishmaelite. Nevertheless there are times when men feel drawn rather to the wilderness than to the hustings or the forum. And if we ask to whom it is that Mr. Ruskin looks as his teacher in political and social wisdom, no honest reader of his works can give any other answer than the name of Thomas Carlyle. For evil and for good Mr. Ruskin has been influenced by Carlyle; for evil, as when the molten lava, which poured with such majestic fitness from the mouth of the volcanic prophet, is reproduced in the angry flame which sometimes plays about the flower-like beauty of the artist's words; for good, in the stern sense of righteousness, the sympathy with human suffering, the simplicity of life and thought, which have redeemed from all suspicion of artistic sensuousness or selfishness the work of John Ruskin. To be the most eagerly read of all serious writers in any age is to wield a mighty power, and all the more if the writer's message be one of defiance.

To the same effect, but in far other language,

does another writer take up the challenge against the scientific school. There are some men who work with sledge-hammers, others who use vinegar to split the rocks. Mr. Matthew Arnold<sup>175</sup> does not heap terrific denunciations of wrath upon Philistinism, but his attack is none the less deadly. Very quietly, and with a meaning smile on his face, he picks out the weak places in the too conspicuous armour of his foe, and plants in them little stinging darts of sarcasm and ridicule that rankle and fester when a sword thrust would have healed. He does not paint in glowing terms the miseries resulting from an abuse or a fallacy, but he takes the evil thing, strips it quietly of its gaudy clothing, and leaves it, naked and ashamed, to slink out of sight. He does not disavow the name of Liberal which he once professed, but he terms himself "a Liberal tempered by experience." It is one of the surest signs of success to be abused by one's enemies, and this sign has been abundantly vouchsafed to Mr. Matthew Arnold. He does not write in such a bold hand as Mr. Ruskin, he can only be read by those whose sight is comparatively keen. But it is the keen-sighted people at whom he aims. He knows that the flock has bell-wethers, and that if he can move them the rest will follow.

And Mr. Matthew Arnold too, though he may not freely admit the fact, is indebted to Carlyle.

<sup>175</sup> These pages were written before the lamented death of the author of *Literature and Dogma*.

What is his *Culture and Anarchy* but a sermon on the text of the *Latter Day Pamphlets*, though the remedy it suggests may not be such as Carlyle would have approved? Nothing can be more unlike than the style of the two men. Yet with the very smallest allowance for this difference, cannot we fancy these words of the younger writer almost an echo of the *Sartor*?—"To walk staunchly by the best light one has, to be strict and sincere with oneself, not to be of the number of those who say and do not, to be in earnest—this is the discipline by which alone man is enabled to rescue his life from thralldom to the passing moment and to his bodily senses, to ennoble it, and to make it eternal."<sup>176</sup> The pessimism of Mr. Matthew Arnold's poetic years has left him shy of all appearance of enthusiasm, yet we feel that under his polished exterior there is a tenacity of purpose which bears some likeness to the vivid energy of the old prophet. And is not his "*power which makes for righteousness*" something very near to Carlyle's idea of the Divine force by whose ordering Right is also ultimately made Might? Carlyle defines prayer as "the aspiration of our poor struggling, heavy-laden soul towards its Eternal Father;"<sup>177</sup> and Mr. Matthew Arnold, in an edition of one of his works published two years after this definition of Carlyle's was given to the world, speaks of prayer as "at bottom nothing else

<sup>176</sup> *Culture and Anarchy*, 3rd edit., Preface, p. xlviii.

<sup>177</sup> Carlyle, *First Forty*, vol. ii., p. 22.

than an energy of aspiration towards the eternal *not ourselves* that makes for righteousness."<sup>178</sup>

But if we are not satisfied with the evidence of poets and men of letters, we can turn to testimony against which no charge of levity can be brought by the severest Benthamite. The author of *Ancient Law*<sup>179</sup> is a writer well qualified by the hardest scientific training to understand the tendencies of modern politics. That work was one of the earliest and most successful attempts towards the application of Darwinian principles to mental science. Mill himself spoke of the book with enthusiasm,<sup>180</sup> and the works which have since come from the same pen are sufficient to convince even Mr. Herbert Spencer that here is one who is not speaking on social questions without a previous study of the laws of the social organism. And when an author of such ripe wisdom and practical experience as Sir Henry Maine arrays against a popular institution such a formidable series of charges as those advanced by his latest work, it is time that the supporters of the institution should look to their defences. *Democracy* has thrown down a challenge which has not as yet been seriously accepted. It is an attack on representative government with the weapons on the use of which it is most apt to pride itself.

And finally, if it be objected to Mr. Ruskin that

<sup>178</sup> *Literature and Dogma*, 3rd (popular) edit., 1884, p. 32, note; and cf. "A force which is *not we*," *Heroes*, p. 8.

<sup>179</sup> We are passing over new graves. Sir Henry Maine has also gone.

<sup>180</sup> *Dissertations*, vol. iv., p. 130.

he is a poet, to Mr. Matthew Arnold that he is a man of letters, to Sir Henry Maine that he is an academic politician, there is still another enemy of representative government against whom all such charges fail. Sir James Stephen is of all men least given to academic crotchets, and he has had unrivalled opportunities of judging of the working of government, considered in some of its most practical aspects. Yet he has written a considerable book with the avowed object of combating certain well-known political maxims which are really the guiding principles of the school to which Mill belonged. *Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity* is the deliberate attack of an eminently practical man upon a tone of thought which characterizes the whole policy of the Radical school, and its appearance is the more remarkable that upon more than one fundamental conclusion of speculative philosophy its author is at one with the leaders of the Mill cult. Probably no serious critic would accuse Sir James Stephen of vagueness or sentimentalism, and his objections to the political philosophy of the scientific school certainly do not arise from inability to comprehend its methods. The truth is that Sir James Stephen possesses a knowledge of average human nature which seems to be superior, for practical use, to the generalizations of psychology. Sir James Stephen, be it remarked, is an avowed admirer of Carlyle.

And if we are asked where, in practical affairs, is the recoil from *laissez-faire* and the tendencies



of the Radical school, we may point simply to two very significant facts, the one significant because it is the direct reversal of ideas which were once successfully advocated by some of the most distinguished teachers of that school, the other because it was a decision given against the most popular political chief of modern times, in the full flush of his popularity, just after the achievement of a brilliant success. One fact is the total change of national feeling with regard to the separation of the colonies from the mother-country. The other is the flat refusal of the nation to sanction the disintegration of the United Kingdom. Both these facts are of first-rate importance.

But this is, after all, only the negative side of the new movement. If the old order is to vanish we must have something in its place. Are there any signs that a creative force is at work?

Certainly in one direction, at least, we have done something to carry out Carlyle's teaching. We have practically given up *laissez-faire*. We have made more than one effort to cure the evil of bribery. We have undertaken the education of the whole people. We have attempted to secure decent dwellings for the poor, and have provided an army of officials to watch over the public health. We have made employers responsible to their workmen for the negligence of those whom the employers have selected to work with them. We have made some attempt to guard against the building of rotten ships and rotten houses. We have declined to



allow manufacturers to grind the lives out of their workmen simply because the latter are too foolish or too weak to care for their own interests. We have said that the future of the nation shall not be imperilled by the overworking of women and children. We have provided recreation-grounds for the poor, and have done something to make cleanliness a possibility to every child of Adam in the land. We have appointed a Public Prosecutor, to put a stop to the scandal of unpunished crimes, and we have made some effort to guide and guard the helpless flock of emigrants who year by year leave our shores in search of a land where work and bread shall be possible for all. This is little enough to boast of, but it hardly falls within the limits of *laissez-faire*. We have ceased to take as our ideal "Anarchy *plus* a street-constable"; we have begun to think of leading men in the way of righteousness. We have done enough to rouse the wrath and despair of Mr. Herbert Spencer, who complains that he is left, like a pelican in the wilderness, to mourn over the time when every man did that which was right in his own eyes.

But if the chaos is to become cosmos, there must be development as well as order. Are there any signs from the huge masses of men and women which a century of mechanical advance has gathered in the land, that these masses are settling down into an harmonious nation, into a civilization in which each man shall have his part, and no human strength be wasted? Is there reason to believe

that, to borrow a scientific phrase, the social *blastema* will become an *organism*? If this is ever to be, it must be possible for us to detect some traces of incipient organs in the undeveloped mass.

Everywhere there are signs, small perhaps, but significant, that a beginning has been made. There is one phenomenon, which has in other countries played a large part in history, and which is destined to have a future in England—the working men's club. The list of these institutions in England and Wales is a document which may well startle those who have a nervous horror of any manifestation of life among the lower classes. These clubs are no hothouse offspring of amiable philanthropy; there are societies and "guilds" enough of that kind. But the really important thing is a club which is supported and governed solely by those for whose interests it exists, and the fidelity with which the working-man adheres to his connection with it, the indisputable signs of vigour which it manifests, the evident determination of its supporters to turn it to good account, are amongst the most hopeful, as well as the most ominous signs for the future of society. All these clubs have a common character, and many of them are actually bound together by a definite connection. The word which describes the common character of these bodies is a word which is often misunderstood; it is a word which, like so many other words, is inseparably bound up with a host of major and minor prejudices, yet it is a word representing an idea without which no permanent

settlement of a community can be possible. The common characteristic of these bodies is that they are *socialistic*.

But the incipient organization does not stop with its lowest form. Above the small body united for social purposes we have larger bodies united for economic purposes, and above these again still larger organizations for legislative and defensive purposes. The experiment which was tried forty years ago at Rochdale proved successful, and now in many cases the economic wants of the working-man are supplied by societies which own no allegiance to capitalist or employer of labour. Much experience has been dearly purchased, and the new birth has not been achieved without sore pangs, but now it stands delivered and ready to grow. And in place of the old craft-guilds which the new conditions of labour swept away, we have Trades-Unions to regulate the relations of labour and capital, to weld together the skill and strength of scattered masses into an effective power. Mr. Herbert Spencer may rail as he likes at Trades-Unions, and employers may unite to put them down, but it will be in vain. The peril which threatened England when a selfish and short-sighted legislation attempted to forbid to labouring men what the law allowed to all other classes has happily passed away, and a wiser spirit prevails. Stretching hands down to the single workman in the great factory, and up to the vast masses of skilled labour in foreign lands, Trades-Unions have become a power in the earth.

Other causes are co-operating to bring about a feeling of unity among the working classes. Improvement in the means of communication renders united action possible in a way which could not have been imagined in the last century. The collection of kindred spirits in the vast model dwellings of large towns is leading to a greater homogeneity of thought in the artizan world. Even the extension of the franchise, lamentably as it fails to correct the evil tendencies of political institutions, effects a quickening of consciousness through the sense of common privileges. The freer speech and thought of many who return from the colonies to end their days in the old home are a revelation to those nursed in old traditions. Looking at the great marks of social division in the nation, and excluding merely professional organizations, it may be doubted whether any class possesses such abundant materials for future development as this artizan class. The aristocracy has still the remnants of its old traditions and instincts, but these have been rudely treated in the last fifty years. The great middle-class has scarcely anything that can be called a rallying-point. Its members are, for the most part, ashamed of their station, and eager to climb into the ranks of the class above them.

Is there no application in the teaching of Carlyle to these new conditions? We may be very sure that the nascent organism will develop, but it may not be so certain that it will develop into a healthy and well-toned body. A man who has grown up in

the midst of opposition and ungenerous criticism, who has fought his way, inch by inch, against grinding hostility, will prove a sturdy and eminently capable character, but he may also turn out to be not a little sour and harsh. For want of a little sympathy, a little kindly help, the new order may grow up hard-hearted and fierce. For want of a little knowledge, it may prove bigoted and reactionary. For want of noble examples and worthy objects of worship, it may come to be sordid in its aspirations and mean in its achievements. For want of a little spiritual enlightenment, it may fail to catch the true meaning, the awful wonder and significance, the infinite capabilities of life. *Laissez-faire* will not teach these things; it has had its day, and is about to depart. Happily, as yet, an union between the old world and the new has not become impossible. There may be a little contempt in the eyes which the new creation turns upon the dying dispensation, perhaps a shade of bitterness; but, happily, as yet, no irreconcilable hatred. But who knows when the change may come? It is not with futile attempts at repression, not with disdainful standing aloof, not with supercilious interference, that the departing age must welcome the struggles towards the light of the coming order. But by true sympathy, by unaffected sharing of the stores of the past amongst those whose strength lies in the future, by the pointing to great ideals, by the example in word and deed of a true reverence for all men noble and all things worthy, that the new



crisis must be brought to end in victory. Without selfish regret for its own departed glories, with no unworthy craving for the prizes of the new epoch, but with an earnest desire for the perpetual triumph of truth and justice, with true brotherly and loyal affection, must the dying monarch welcome the steps of his successor. It is the common lot. Why should he repine? Now, as it has ever been—

The old order changeth, yielding place to new,  
And God fulfils Himself in many ways,  
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.

Of the nature and qualities of the new age we need not attempt to prophesy too minutely. But of one thing all omens assure us. The genius of the new world will not be glory, nor beauty, nor even knowledge, but *work*. Glory and beauty and knowledge will be there, but they will be grouped around the central figure; on the banner of the nation will be inscribed this device, "*Work, for the night cometh,*" and in place of spear and sword will be seen the mason's hammer and the student's pen. Men have found out that the reward of labour is inexhaustible; that the bottom of each mine of discovery opens into a still lower depth of riches. But the work will be for its own sake, not for the rewards which it brings; it will be duty, not covetousness, which nerves the worker's arm. And as all faiths must have their prophets, so long as the souls of men can be stirred by the voice of one who sees clearly what they feel dimly, who has stood in the Holy of Holies while



they have been waiting in the outer court, who has climbed the mount and been hidden in the storm, so long will the Gospel of Work have its prophets and heroes. And when we look around for the prophets of the new faith, whom shall we find more fitted to bear aloft the sacred banner than him who raised it amid the jeers and contempt of a generation brought up in Egyptian slavery, who refused to bow the knee to the gods of the heathen when all around him were prostrate in adoration, who has sung the marching music of the new era in tones that vibrate to the very hearts of those who hear them—whom with higher claims than Thomas Carlyle?

## CHAPTER V.

### PARERGA.

A FEW words will suffice to add to our former accounts of Carlyle and Mill a short notice of the works which they produced beyond those already referred to. There is, of course, no logical distinction between the productions before discussed and those which we have now to consider. The minds of both Carlyle and Mill were distinctly "of a piece"; when we have once grasped the idea of each there is no difficulty in seeing how all their achievements are the natural results of its working. But the diffidence of an inferior critic prefers to deal with the spirit and principal figures of his picture as themselves the primary subjects of his task, rather than, by attempting to include the whole canvas in one description, to run the risk of losing his coherency in a multitude of details.

There are, again, some events in the history of the two men of which it is evidently impossible for an ordinary writer to give any account. Mill was for thirty-five years in the service of the East India Company, and though we may be perfectly sure that

in this capacity his conduct was influenced by the same admirable qualities as those which distinguished his public life, we naturally find little record of his labours beyond the general testimony of his official superiors to his worth. His employment in the India Office is, however, interesting on two grounds. In the first place it is an illustration of the fact that a large amount of varied and valuable intellectual work may be produced by men who are obliged by the force of circumstances to do routine duty. It does not appear that Mill went so far as Coleridge and Lamb in recommending some sublunary pursuit as a positive help towards higher culture, although he "found office duties an actual rest from other mental occupations."<sup>181</sup> The perpetually recurring claims of routine work must necessarily limit the amount of observation and reading which an inductive philosopher ought to do, and the mental rest required by the severe labours of classification and formulation of laws may very well be obtained from the latter source, or from the still better occupation of out-door exercise. It is fairly certain that Gibbon would never have written his great history had his means not allowed him to make it his sole task for many years. And we may be sure that Spinoza would not have taken to grinding lenses had not the necessities of his position compelled him. The great advantage of an independent occupation is that it enables an author to be perfectly unbiassed by sordid motives in his writings. And if a man whose

<sup>181</sup> *Autobiography*, p. 83.

routine duties demand a large share of his daily life have sufficient energy to turn steadily to intellectual pursuits as an addition to his occupations, it may be assumed with some probability that the work he produces in the latter sphere will not be without merit. But if a man has not the moral strength to keep himself from anarchy or idleness without the perpetual corrective of a bread-winning occupation, he is hardly worthy to aspire to the ranks of literature or science. And, however small the pittance be, if a man *has* wherewith to pay his way, he had better avoid altogether the maelstrom of Mammon-worship, in which so many noble intellects have perished.

But Mill's connection with the India Office is also interesting as the probable cause of an important chapter of his political philosophy. Whilst he held the absolute suitability of the representative system to nearly all European countries, and to all the English-speaking colonies and dependencies, he denied that it was applicable to oriental countries, such as India, or that such possessions could be advantageously administered by a Parliamentary Government at all. The most scientific persons are liable to bias, and just as we refuse to accept as objective truth Mill's estimate of his wife's intellectual qualities, so do we refuse to assume the fundamental distinction in point of civilization between the Australian Bush colonists and the native Indian nationalities which Mill saw. Undoubtedly it is true that the virtue of a form of government depends,

not on an absolute ideal standard, but on the condition of the people to whom it is to be applied. And undoubtedly it is true that Mill has made out a very strong case for the merits of representative government under certain conditions. But the point in which he seems to fail is the proof that in her present condition of development England is really fit for representative government. And a very strong reason for requiring this proof is to be found in the passage in which he combats the application of Representative principles to India.<sup>182</sup> It need hardly be pointed out that, although Mill spoke on Indian affairs with great knowledge, yet he is obliged in his argument to resort at least once to mere dogma. "The government of a people by itself has a meaning and a reality; but such a thing as government of one people by another does not and cannot exist."<sup>183</sup> To a mind unacquainted with the peculiar form of reasoning by which the advocates of a representative system satisfy themselves that a man can be both governor and governed, this statement will seem to need complete reversal.

Of Mill's appearance in the House of Commons we have already spoken. All the circumstances connected with it were eminently honourable to him, and it cannot be doubted that his example in such an atmosphere must have done good. Nevertheless, it may well be questioned whether he did anything in Parliament which he could not as well, or

<sup>182</sup> *Representative Government*, pp. 325—340.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 325.

better, have done outside it. He already commanded a wider public than that of the House of Commons ; it is doubtful whether even the reports of his speeches extended his influence. And he certainly was never born to sway an audience by the power of his oratory. Had he been re-elected, his strong sense of duty would probably have led him to waste his matured powers in committees and other processes, capable of being dealt with by far inferior men. His appearance is a noteworthy testimony to the fact that a popular constituency could in the year 1865 elect a man of high moral and intellectual worth as its representative. But it deserves also to be remembered that, upon the enlargement of the constituency by an Act of Parliament which he had himself supported, Mill was rejected.

Under the head of *parerga* come naturally to be considered the minor writings of an author who has produced also systematic works. Besides the editions of Bentham's *Rationale of Judicial Evidence* and James Mill's *Analysis of the Phenomena of the Human Mind*, both works of first-rate scientific importance, Mill wrote a great number of articles for the various periodicals with which he was connected. Four volumes of these contributions were collected and published by their author under the title of *Dissertations and Discussions*, and now remain as evidence of his industry and the scope of his learning. Of these essays it may fairly be said that, while they must have been excellent as magazine articles, they are hardly calculated to be of permanent value as



isolated works. In the first-place they do not, as a rule, deal with subjects of first-rate importance. Students who are sufficiently interested in scientific pursuits to be desirous of knowing about the topics of which they treat will naturally go to the originals for their knowledge, while the casual reader will hardly be sufficiently interested by the subjects to attack Mill's articles. Michelet, and De Tocqueville, and Whewell, and Bain, and Carrel, and Guizot, are all men whose works are known to students, but the world at large will not care very much about them; they were none of them epoch-making men in any large sense of the term.

And again, Mill's way of dealing with his subjects is much more suited to the exigencies of an ephemeral publication than to the needs of permanent works. He very rarely gives his matter a human interest by introducing into it a biographical sketch. In the essay on Berkeley's works, for example, where he has a truly great figure to deal with, he mentions only one fact in his author's history, and that in a merely detached way. In such a place a critic like Bagehot would have given us a lively portrait of a man who is really far less known than he deserves to be. Those who are acquainted with Bagehot's essay on another great episcopal figure, Bishop Butler, will at once appreciate the superiority of the later production regarded as a permanent work. Mill's object appears to be so exclusively directed towards making known the merits of a particular publication, that there is almost a suspicion of book-

seller about his criticism. He is anxious that the work under review shall sell, and so he brings out the most attractive portions of it; or else he deals with the subject polemically, and the matter becomes one of scientific argument, in which the public can hardly be expected to take much interest. Where an author feels himself strong enough for the task, there is much to be said in favour of Macaulay's celebrated method of dealing with the biographer of Warren Hastings. When we turn over the pages of a volume of collected essays, a gallery of complete portraits should pass before us; if in the gallery we find strange faces, and especially strange faces which recall well-known names, so much the better. We have added to our stock of knowledge, and the comfortable conceit of our judgments has received a shock; each of which occurrences is very good for us. But it is a trifle wearisome to behold an author going through a series of embraces or duels, in most of which the other party to the engagement is hidden from view.

We have said that the *Dissertations* are principally concerned with scientific subjects, and this is evident at a glance. Even the essay on Coleridge cannot be excepted from this criticism. But there are two articles which are especially interesting, as being almost the sole surviving attempts of their author in the province of pure literature. It will be remembered that, after abandoning his first out-and-out Benthamism, Mill turned with some success to the study of poetry, and ever afterwards insisted on the

value of it as a mental stimulus. Unfortunately, it is quite clear, from a perusal of these two essays, that he had no real appreciation of poetry. In the first, that entitled *Thoughts on Poetry and its Varieties*, he does undoubtedly say one fine thing, though possibly the thought is finer than its appropriateness. "Eloquence is *heard*, poetry is *overheard*."<sup>184</sup> If by this aphorism Mill means to imply that true poetry is never concerned with producing an immediate impression, then undoubtedly nothing could be truer or more apt than his criticism. But apparently he means more than this. For he everywhere insists, throughout the essays, on the *subjectiveness* of poetry. "The poetry is not in the object itself, nor in the scientific truth itself, but in the state of mind in which the one and the other may be contemplated."<sup>185</sup> This is the real groundwork of all Mill's theory, and it leads him to strange results. It makes him deny spontaneousness and lyrical power to Wordsworth, the author of *The Highland Reaper*; it makes him regard the poet as the essential opposite of the man of action, whereas the very greatest poets, Shakespeare, Cervantes, Dante, Milton, Goethe, have been eminently men of action; it leads him to the paradox that "one may write genuine poetry, and not be a poet,"<sup>186</sup> and it finally brings him to the thoroughly characteristic conclusion that *Nascitur Poeta* is an antiquated prejudice. He does not

<sup>184</sup> *Dissertations and Discussions*, vol. i., p. 71.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79.

actually affirm that a poet may be produced by a suitable system of education, but he throws out strong hints in that direction.<sup>187</sup> It is quite clear that whatever Mill may have thought of the attractiveness or the utility of poetry, he did not believe in its *truth*, in any high sense of the word. He expressly denies that poetry addresses itself to the belief.<sup>188</sup> In fact, he sums up his definition "in limiting poetry to the delineation of the states of feeling, and denying the name where nothing is delineated but outward objects."<sup>189</sup> If Mill had applied his own philosophy of induction to the subject of poetry, he would have found that while the feature which he predicates as the poetic essential is indeed painfully prominent in a certain school of poets which was in the ascendant when he wrote, the characteristic is entirely hidden in those whom the world has agreed to call its master-singers.

It is not to be supposed that, in assigning to poetry a subjective character, Mill meant to bring in the whole of philosophic speculation by a side wind. He spoke merely of mental altitudes as ordinarily understood. Whether an objective world exists or not, it is certain that the great poets write as though they believed it did. And so we may usefully contrast with Mill's view of poetry the definition given by Carlyle, also without any metaphysical intent. "The Greeks fabled of Sphere-Harmonies ;

<sup>187</sup> *Dissertations and Discussions*, vol. i., p. 88.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 68.

it was the feeling they had of the inner structure of Nature ; that the soul of all her voices and utterances was perfect music. Poetry therefore we will call *musical Thought*. The Poet is he who *thinks* in that manner. At bottom it turns still on power of intellect ; it is a man's sincerity and depth of vision that makes him a Poet. See deep enough, and you see music ; the heart of Nature *being* everywhere music, if you can only reach it." <sup>190</sup> The contrast is plain ; with Mill poetry is subjective, individual truth : with Carlyle, it is objective, universal truth. And it is not a little wonderful that Carlyle's view of music, which seems so defiantly transcendental, has already been strengthened as a scientific theory by Wagner's celebrated essay on Beethoven.

Those who desire to see Mill's theory brought into practical use as the groundwork of criticism, may read his essay on the *Writings of Alfred de Vigny*, where the actual poet is accounted for in the most satisfactory way, and where the ideal poet is represented as sitting down to ask himself, before he writes, "whether it were for the good of humanity at the particular era that Conservative or Radical feeling should most predominate." <sup>191</sup> Evidently Mill did not grasp the truth that a real poet has no choice in what he produces, and looks only to his work and not to its effects.

<sup>190</sup> *Heroes*, p. 78.

<sup>191</sup> *Dissertations and Discussions*, vol. i., p. 294.

Ich singe, wie der Vogel singt,  
Der in den Zweigen wohnet;  
Das Lied, das aus der Kehle dringt,  
Ist Lohn, der reichlich lohnet.

Or as Tennyson has it—

I do but sing because I must,  
And pipe but as the linnets sing.

If, on the other hand, we turn to Carlyle's minor productions, we find a body of work not merely of sterling merit, but of perpetual interest. *The Life of Schiller*, the *Wilhelm Meister*, and the essays on various branches of German literature, with the short translations from the Romance writers, form an early cycle of Carlyle's productions which accomplished the important task of making English readers acquainted with the treasures of German literature. Everybody now learns German, and can afford to despise translations. But how much of this happy result is due to Carlyle? In the early days of the century all people who desired to be thought accomplished professed an acquaintance with French. If the long war had done nothing else, it had at least made French almost an essential for thousands of people. But to know German was a rare accomplishment, and one which was occasionally looked upon with suspicion. Shortly before Carlyle began to write, Hannah More had lifted up the apron of virtuous alarm against the threatened "irruption of those swarms of publications now daily issuing from the banks of the Danube, which, like their ravaging predecessors of the darker ages, though



with far other and more fatal arms, are overrunning civilized society." Hannah More's enthusiasm for moral virtue has more than once led her into strange positions, but surely the authoress of *The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain* hardly ever appears in a stranger light than when holding back with one mighty arm the invasion of a Schiller, a Richter, and a Novalis, while with the other she welcomes the correct classical writers of the French school.

Like most persons who can see beyond the limited range of ordinary human vision, Carlyle had to bear with strong opposition from self-constituted advisers. Jeffrey, then the presiding genius of the great critical organ of the day, laughed his German divinities to scorn, and prophesied fearlessly that no one would ever care to believe in them. De Quincey spoke of Goethe, Carlyle's great inspirer, in terms too coarse to be repeated. All the Benthamite school, scarcely even excepting Mill himself, despised German philosophy and German literature as "mystical." Yet Carlyle persevered, with the result that, mainly owing to his efforts, *Faust*, and *Wallenstein*, and *Minna von Barnhelm* are now familiar in translations or originals to every member of the reading public. Had he done nothing else, Carlyle would have been entitled to an honourable place in English literature as the revealer of the treasures of Germany.

But he did a very great deal more. The three latter volumes of the *Miscellanies* are a cabinet of the most brilliant jewels, each complete in itself. Carlyle never assumes knowledge in his readers,

though he never insults them by forcing upon their notice things which they already know. He has a rare gift of steering clear between patronage and flattery. And what a perfect string of cameos he has given us in *Boswell*, and *Mirabeau*, and *Dr. Francia*, and *Heyne*, and *Count Cagliostro*, and *Voltaire*. Each figure stands out before us clear and complete, birth, parents, fortune, circumstances, all distinctly legible, outlined against the most delightful setting of anecdote and observation. Sometimes his subjects are well-known names, and then Carlyle has to combat old prejudices, nearly always succeeding in proving to his reader that they *are* prejudices. In other cases he is dealing with figures less familiar to the public eye, and then he is careful to create a distinct and living portrait. When he has a story to tell, he is absolutely unrivalled. In the opening pages of *The Diamond Necklace* he implicitly undertakes to show that truth is more interesting than fiction, and amply does he redeem his promise. The wildest of Hans Andersen's tales does not surpass in daring this historical sketch of events which actually happened just a hundred years ago. The same gift of dramatic power, for such it really is, may be seen too in the story from German history, *The Prinzenraub*. From Mexico to Russia his mind seems to travel with perfect ease; he reads the characters of men as clearly when they are engaged in quelling one revolution in Paraguay, as when they are busy fomenting another in St. Petersburg.

The crowning triumph of Carlyle's minor works is, and will remain, his *Life of Sterling*. His subject was one of great difficulty. Sterling was a man endeared to all who knew him by an indefinable sweetness of character, and an equally indefinable halo of promise. The permanent work which he did amounted to practically nothing. His biographer had to delineate a character entirely spiritual, never reduced into form by concrete action. All men who knew Sterling loved him, and all were convinced that he had great things in him. Unfortunately he, like Clough and Amiel, died before his possibilities became performances. There was no room here for the mere compiling biographer, the Boswell or the Forster. Such men are useful as dictionaries to the lives of long-lived and completed geniuses, such as Johnson and Landor, but they would find no scope in the case of a man like Sterling. From their works the reader has to create the portrait for himself, and, unfortunately, the materials of Sterling's life were only recognizable by those who actually knew him. He needed for his biographer a man of genius, and may be regarded as supremely fortunate in finding him. It is entirely certain that, but for Carlyle's book, the memory of Sterling would have been completely lost by this time. There is nothing of him that would survive in dictionaries. Author of *Strafford* is all that could be said about him in such compilations, and who now reads *Strafford*? It is a common remark that the men who really make life pleasant and noble for us are soon lost to fame,

while the memories which survive are those whose influence we do not recognize. Carlyle has arrested one of these human figures in its flight towards the land of darkness, and made it immortal.

Before passing on to the last item in our list we may just cast a passing glance at another benefit for which, if Mr. Froude's account be correct, we are indebted to Carlyle. This is the institution known as "The London Library," in St. James's Square. In 1840 there was no reading-room at the British Museum and no Guildhall Free Library, while the ordinary "circulating libraries" could hardly be expected to satisfy the wants of serious readers. Even to this day the "London Library," as a storehouse of good books which can be borrowed and taken away, is a great boon; in the days when it was first started it must have been of priceless value. And, if we are to believe Mr. Froude, its foundation was due to the energy of Carlyle. Unfortunately, his biographer does not produce any testimony to the truth of his assertion, and it is not, perhaps, surprising that the credit of the enterprise should be given, in the popular estimation, to the chairman of the meeting at which the plan was finally determined on. At the same time, no one who has studied Carlyle's character with any care will say that this was a thing beyond his powers. Transcendental and imaginative as he was, no man of the world ever managed his business affairs with more shrewdness and success, of course within the lines peremptorily drawn by his sense of right and wrong.

Where he could satisfy himself that the object was entirely worthy, few men could achieve it with more complete certainty than Carlyle.

It now remains only to speak of one very large item of work which Carlyle accomplished, in addition to the labours already touched upon. This is, of course, his historical productions. And as it is by these, perhaps even more than by his other writings, that he is known to the greater world of European thought, it may be worth while to ascertain the view which he took of the province of the historian. And this is the more necessary that Mill also took a very decided interest in the subject, and, as we have seen, has left some interesting thoughts about it, though he never achieved anything as an illustration of his views.

Carlyle's ideal of history was the history which appears in the Old Testament. The historical books of the Bible were written by men who saw in the events which befell individuals and nations the workings of a Divine Providence, rewarding the good and punishing the evil.

"In the three and twentieth year of Joash the son of Ahaziah King of Judah, Jehoahaz the son of Jehu began to reign over Israel in Samaria, and reigned seventeen years.

"And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, and followed the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which made Israel to sin; he departed not therefrom.

"And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and He delivered them into the hand of Hazael King of Syria, and into the hand of Ben-hadad the son of Hazael, all their days."<sup>192</sup>

This is an example of the way in which history presented itself to the Hebrew prophets, and this was the view Carlyle took of it. The simple "did evil in the sight of the Lord," which satisfied the minds of primitive men, would have, of course, to be expanded into a narrative of greater detail. But in the ethical tone of the Bible history Carlyle found what he sought in vain in other records of the past.

In the view that he took, the history of Israel was only more valuable than the history of any other nation, by virtue of the fact that it was incomparably better written. For Carlyle, the God who ruled in Palestine ruled also in England, and by the same laws of justice. Consequently, the events of English history were just as truly evidences of the working of Divine justice as the events of Jewish history, and they would be, if properly interpreted, far more impressive to English minds, as being naturally more interesting and familiar.

But the important fact was that whereas the history of Israel was written by a Moses and a Samuel, men whose whole souls were filled with the overpowering sense of the nearness and majesty of God, who judged every event by its relationship with the laws of righteousness, who were gifted with piercing insight and absorbing enthusiasm for their subject, who were, in a word, *inspired*,—the history of England was written by men like Hume and Macaulay, who saw only in the fate of nations the proof or disproof of certain small political theories, or by mere chroniclers like Stow and Holinshed.



The true function of the historian then is, "interpreting the mysterious ways of Divine Providence in this Universe,"<sup>193</sup> or turning over the pages of the "grand sacred Epos, or Bible of World-History; infinite in meaning as the Divine Mind it emblems; wherein he is wise that can read here a line and there a line."<sup>194</sup>

Of course it will readily be objected that this is a task the complete fulfilment of which is beyond human powers. And Carlyle was not the man to shirk this obvious difficulty. He points it out very forcibly in several passages, from one of which we may extract a line or two.

"The most gifted man can observe, still more can record, only the *series* of his own impressions; his observation, therefore, to say nothing of its other imperfections, must be *successive*, while the things done were often *simultaneous*; the things done were not a series, but a group. . . . Narrative is *linear*, Action is *solid*. . . . Truly if History is Philosophy teaching by Experience, the writer fitted to compose History is hitherto an unknown man. The Experience itself would require All-Knowledge to record it,—were the All-wisdom needful for such Philosophy as would interpret it to be had for the asking."<sup>195</sup>

It is evident then that Carlyle saw, as clearly as his scientific contemporaries, the impossibility of dealing, *en masse*, with the infinity of circumstances of which the shortest period of history is really composed, and equally clear that he saw the necessity of finding central points upon which the web of history could be hung.

<sup>193</sup> *Friedrich*, vol. i., p. 143.

<sup>194</sup> *Cagliostro*, "Miscellanies," vol. v., p. 65.

<sup>195</sup> *On History*, "Miscellanies," vol. iv., pp. 257, 258.

But he differed entirely from the scientific school in his choice of these points. We have seen that Mill took for his guide "the state of the intellectual faculties of mankind," as being "the main determining cause of the social progress."<sup>196</sup> Carlyle preferred to leave the doubtful theory implied in the word *progress* out of sight altogether. As a transcendentalist he recognised the existence of an internal as well as an external world, and it seemed to him that the record of the internal world, as translated by the actions of great men, was a surer guide than scientific speculation to the mysteries of the universe. Great men appeared to him to be the dominating influences by which the colour was given to a period, of all the forces at work infinitely the most powerful, and, what was practically important, infinitely the most evident and describable. Whatever might be the ulterior influences acting on man himself, every act and every thought which had shaped the current of the world's history had come finally from the hand or brain of a human being, and further than this, in the way of scientific enquiry, it did not seem to him possible to go. This had been his earliest faith. "Great men are the inspired (speaking and acting) texts of that Divine Book of REVELATIONS, whereof a chapter is completed from epoch to epoch, and by some named HISTORY."<sup>197</sup> And he still clung to it as time went on. "What is the Bible of a nation, the practically-credited God's message to a nation? Is

<sup>196</sup> *Logic*, book vi., cap. x., § 7. *Ante*, p. 154.

<sup>197</sup> *Sartor*, p. 122.

it not, beyond all else, the authentic Biography of its Heroic Souls ? " <sup>198</sup> It seemed to him that the Stuarts came back not because the reign of Puritanism had reached the limit of its capabilities, but because Cromwell was dead and there was no one to take his place ; that the disastrous collapse of Prussia at the end of the eighteenth century was the natural result of the change from Friedrich the Great to Friedrich Wilhelm II., and its subsequent revival due to the devoted efforts of such men as the Humboldts, Hardenberg, and Stein. And so history came to mean to him "the essence of innumerable biographies." <sup>199</sup>

This method of writing history gave scope to one of Carlyle's most conspicuous gifts, his power of imagination. The view which Mill regarded as the highest aspect of historical writing, in which "the whole of the events which have befallen the human race, and the states through which it has passed, are regarded as a series of phenomena, produced by causes, and susceptible of explanation," <sup>200</sup> affords little scope for the peculiar gift of imaginative genius. And accordingly we find Mill placing the Carlylese method in the second rank only, <sup>201</sup> and inclining to doubt the value of Michelet's historical imagination. <sup>202</sup> But in dealing with other men of genius the man of

<sup>198</sup> *Latter Day Pamphlets*, p. 239.

<sup>199</sup> *On History*, "Miscellanies," vol. ii., p. 255.

<sup>200</sup> *Michelet's History of France*, "Dissertations and Discussions," vol. ii., p. 129.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 128.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 142.

genius finds himself in the society of those whom he understands and realizes. Where the records are deficient, he can fill up the blanks from his own conviction of what the hero's mind *must* have been, he can detect inconsistencies in the accounts of great men written by small men who are entirely incapable of appreciating their greatness, he can give his narrative a life and reasonableness which make it differ from the scraggy collections of mere compilers, as the full action of the stage differs from the ghastly rigidity of the property-room. Instead of showing why things happened, or what things ought to have happened, he draws a living picture of what actually *did* happen; he plays the part, not of the anatomist, but of the creator, by whose breath the dry bones are made to live.

But just as the great artist derives strength and certainty from his studies of anatomy and the laws of perspective, so does the literary historian guard against error by a most assiduous study of the driest records. It would be a fatal mistake to suppose that Carlyle substituted imagination for industry in his historical work. "Faithful Genius at the top and faithful Industry at the bottom" <sup>203</sup> was his idea of a preparation for the writing of history. And he had himself to supply both qualities, for, unhappily, he found no decent industry in the records he had to deal with. It is of course competent for no one who has not been over the same ground to pronounce decidedly whether Carlyle has actually examined

<sup>203</sup> *Friedrich*, vol. i., p. 17.

every nook and corner of it, but so far as we can judge by results, he was not one to shrink from the most exhausting labour. In the *French Revolution* the traces of the spade and pickaxe are not so numerous as in *Cromwell* and *Friedrich*, but in the latter Carlyle appears to have known everything that was generally known in his time, and to have discovered or guessed much that has since been brought to light. The very criticism that is now made in Germany on *Friedrich* is, that it is so loaded with evidences of detailed knowledge as to put almost too great a strain upon the minds of its careful readers.

These ideas Carlyle carried out in his historical writings. Everywhere it is the figures of men around which the action groups itself; men are the links in the chain of causation which binds the drama together. Even in the most famous incidents it is the actors that claim the chief share of our attention.

And what a wonderful result it is. The *French Revolution* is a thing absolutely unique. We read it again and again, and find that here is the thing going on before our eyes. There is very little theory in the book beyond the one great theory that Heaven is taking vengeance for the sins of centuries, that a society rotten to the very heart must eventually fall with a crash. For the rest, Carlyle seems too entirely absorbed in the dramatic interest of the scene to be anxious about doctrines. He is dealing with men whom he thoroughly understands, and seems no more desirous of showing why such events



happened than he would be of discussing the causes of hunger. The book achieves Carlyle's own highest ambition, the reconciliation of the ideal and the actual. With all the fascination of a romance, it has all the literalness of a police-court record.

Still more do the *Letters and Speeches of Cromwell* constitute the study of a great man. Here the author's place is reduced to that of an editor and commentator, and in this department Carlyle has proved himself admirable. The subject was one which excited great interest throughout the country, and there was every opportunity for criticism. The descendants of the men among whom Cromwell lived and moved were still, in many cases, living in the homes of their ancestors, with unbroken traditions of the past, and ample ability to ferret out documentary evidence. Yet, as Carlyle could say with pardonable pride in later editions, nothing was produced which could in the least alter the main outlines of his picture, nor, in fact, anything that demanded material alteration in the original work. The book turned the already wavering current into a new channel. People had begun to suspect that this man Cromwell, who rose from the position of a small country squire to rule the three kingdoms, under whose government England was glorious in peace and successful in war, who laid the foundation of her commercial greatness, and who never lost a battle in which he commanded, could not quite be the shallow hypocrite which the Restoration histories made him out to be. Carlyle's *Lectures on Heroes* had been a word in season, and



now this book, with its first-hand evidence and its careful commentary, put the finishing stroke to the work, and established Cromwell in his true position. A great deal of the labour which the editor had to perform hardly appears in his pages. It consisted in collecting, from the various sources in which they were imbedded, the documents which formed the substance of the work, in comparing discrepant reports and copies, and in testing the genuineness of doubtful cases. In this book Carlyle keeps himself more in the background than is usual with him. He worked with a sincere admiration for the great man whose words he was recording, and he took a disinterested delight in the success of his efforts. As a real key to the position of affairs in a period which has been so frequently distorted by party prejudice, the *Letters and Speeches of Cromwell* is invaluable.

But it is on his *Friedrich of Prussia* that Carlyle's fame as a historian will ultimately rest. It is difficult to trace exactly the attraction which led him to the subject, except it were the conspicuous part played by Friedrich in European affairs. For the Great King had been deaf to the claims of German Literature, he had none of the enthusiasm for righteousness which had drawn Carlyle towards Cromwell, he was not, in the highest sense of the word, a hero, nor does Carlyle ever treat him as such. The subject too was fraught with almost insurmountable difficulties for an English author. Nearly all the authorities were in a most repulsive condition,

oceans of official German prolixity. It was necessary for Carlyle, who hated travelling, to visit personally the scenes of battles, and there was no particular reason to suppose that the people of England would be very anxious to hear about a man who belonged to a departed era, and about whom Englishmen had never been specially enthusiastic. Chatham had been the one English statesman who had seen Friedrich's merit, and his support had been given in the face of much opposition.

Nevertheless Carlyle did begin the work, and did also complete it, in ten substantial volumes. The reserve of power which could carry through such a task as this without sign of flagging, must have been enormous. For whatever else may be said of the book, it is indisputable that the interest never wavers from beginning to end. With all its length there is no suspicion of padding, everything that appears is necessary for the development of the story, or at least hangs naturally by it. Many a man who has taken up the first volume, with the intention of reading no farther, has found himself unable to lay the book aside. Like all good story-tellers, Carlyle "begins at the beginning," and carries us forward by huge strides, but always stopping at the right places, from the capture of Brannibor by Henry the Fowler in the tenth century to the beginning of the reign of Friedrich Wilhelm the First. There he becomes more minute, evidently considering that the work of so forcible a mind as that of Friedrich Wilhelm was of first-rate

importance in shaping the environment of his successor. The portrait of Friedrich Wilhelm is one of the most vivid historical sketches extant. The picture of the vigorous, practical, and conscientious, but somewhat unintellectual and choleric king, will never be forgotten by those who have studied it. The description of Friedrich Wilhelm's *Tabagie*, or informal council, is a marvellous effort of humorous imagination. We have Grumkow, and Seekendorf, and the Dessauer, and other old-world but once important figures, conjured into life again, together with such altogether minor puppets as Gundling and Fassmann.

When he comes to his actual subject the author still maintains his high level of excellence. Who else has so clearly and succinctly stated the famous case of the quarrels between Friedrich and Voltaire? Where is the history of a soldier's reign written with as much insight and correctness as in the account of Friedrich's campaigns? It is especially to be noticed that Carlyle never falls into the inviting error of describing a battle by raptures. In every case we are shown the exact plan formed, the success or failure of the manœuvre, and we take a spectator's interest in the drama before us. But there is nothing of the newspaper correspondent in the description. We are at first perusal inclined to think that the battles occupy too much of the work, that too little room is left for the more peaceful close of Friedrich's reign. But a little consideration shows that this treatment is really in accordance with artistic truth. Friedrich

was a soldier, however much he might disclaim the title, as his father had been an administrator. And as we have seen in the account of Friedrich Wilhelm the plan on which Prussia was administered, there is no need to go at length into the same subject again. Moreover, the centre of European affairs was passing away from Prussia to France for some years before Friedrich's death. He no longer held the balance of power, nor attracted the eyes of the world. Events were preparing west of the Rhine which were to throw the disputes between Austria and Prussia into the shade.

But perhaps the most remarkable feature of the whole work is the almost reckless dashes of humour and fun which the author scatters over its pages. It is almost impossible to believe that the indignant prophet of the *Latter Day Pamphlets*, who pours out his soul in fierce denunciations of woe, is the same man who now, verging towards his seventieth year, invents the most ludicrous epithets for his characters. To take a few at random: we have the "beneficent cashless Uncle",<sup>204</sup> Wolfgang Wilhelm "the Be-slapped",<sup>205</sup> the "bacon-and-greens" conscience of Friedrich Wilhelm,<sup>206</sup> the "supplementary infant" (Don Carlos),<sup>207</sup> the Baroness von Seckendorff's "spiritual rheumatism",<sup>208</sup> the "rapt European public (shilling gallery especially)," and the "deshabille ships" which "were rapidly got buttoned to-

<sup>204</sup> *Friedrich*, vol. i., p. 167.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 103.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. ii., p. 29.

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 111.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

gether.”<sup>209</sup> Friedrich is described as scattering “a few commas and dashes, as if they were shaken out of a pepper-box, upon his page.”<sup>210</sup> The famous Double Marriage project is represented as “Murky Nothingness put on to boil.”<sup>211</sup> In the war of the Spanish Succession all Europe is seen “changing colour seven times, like a lobster boiling.”<sup>212</sup> The Byronic school of poetry is happily put as a “melodious informing of the public what dreadful emotions you labour under,”<sup>213</sup> and of the Battle of Prag Carlyle says, “the very emblem of which, done on the piano by females of energy, scatters mankind to flight who love their ears.”<sup>214</sup> Finally, it may be suggested that no better English equivalent could well be found for the common French expression *infâme canaille*, than Carlyle’s “Ugly Doggery.”<sup>215</sup>

After all, the judgment which each man pronounces upon Carlyle’s historical work will probably depend largely upon his notion of what history ought to be. If it be the duty of the historian merely to delineate one side of human life, the religious, the political, the speculative, then Carlyle will not be accounted a great historian. If it be to trace the successive links in an abstracted chain of events moving onwards by virtue of the laws of causation, neither in that case will Carlyle be deemed great. But if history be really an attempt at a picture of life, and suc-

<sup>209</sup> *Friedrich*, vol. viii., p. 181.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. ii., p. 50.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 77.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 265.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. vii., p. 112.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. iii., p. 222.



cessful as it approaches this ideal, then the verdict will be changed. For life is not all science, nor all politics, nor all speculation, nor is it all grave, nor all gay, but something which contains all these and more, which can be looked at from many standpoints, which appears in different lights to different men. And Carlyle, as a historian whose range of vision sweeps over the whole field of life, who thinks nothing too small to be noticed in its place, who can be fervid with a Cromwell, reckless with a Mirabeau, cool and cynical with a Friedrich, who has a firm grasp of the spiritual, but yet never forgets the material,—Carlyle, as a painter of life, has rarely been surpassed by any artist, and still more rarely by any artist calling himself a historian.



## CHAPTER VI.

### GLEANINGS.

SYSTEM is a good thing, but it is not everything. Hitherto we have endeavoured to keep the furrows straight, and to work by a rule. Now it will be pleasant to look abroad over the fields, and wander carelessly up and down for a few moments in search of scattered ears. Let us be purposely unsystematic.

Perhaps the fact most widely known, by mere count of heads, about Carlyle, is that he wrote in a very singular style. And in this instance the popular impression is correct—it is a very singular style. The matter-of-fact reader finds Carlyle as puzzling as Mr. Browning, and is indignant that a mere prose writer should usurp the privilege accorded from time immemorial to those who cut their matter into lengths. “Who on earth is *Smelfungus*?” exclaims the bewildered reader; “and *Sauerteig*, and *Professor Teufelsdröckh*, who are they? No Lexikon, German or English, mentions their names. The town of *Weissnichtwo* is not to be discovered on any atlas.” And then he picks out some such passage as that which scared the critic of the *Sun* in 1834, making that

bewildered luminary positively wink with amazement, and asks, in a tone of injured reproach, what, in the name of heaven, can be made out of *that*.

The proper answer to such an objection is that the average person cannot understand a man of genius by simply looking at the back of one of his hands, still less by merely seeing his hat lying on the table. He must enquire a little farther.

There are two styles in use among great writers, the personal and the impersonal. The latter affords no clue to the character of the writer, it is simply the most convenient vehicle for the expression of his thought. That is the style of Virgil, Shakspeare, and Goethe. If we fashion for ourselves any picture of these authors, it is from the substance and not from the form of their works that we take our material. And by general consent this is allowed to be the supreme perfection of style. But there is another method, the personal, also adopted by great writers. This conveys to us a striking likeness of the author himself, and though it may be inferior to the other from the point of view of artistic excellence, it is far more interesting as a study. This is the style of Horace, Dante, Milton, and Carlyle. Beneath the transparent skin of their language we see the easy-going, kindly man of the world, the stern, passionate Florentine, the pure, scholarly, but slightly unsympathetic Puritan poet, and the fiery prophet of Craigenputtock. The language of Carlyle is a picture of Carlyle himself; the qualities we find in it are human, not technical. He tells us that he picked it

up in the home at Scotsbrig—that is to say, that it is the natural acquirement of his native character. It is abrupt, restless, vivid, varied, impetuous, eloquent, but occasionally obscure, as he himself was. When it is dealing with spiritual conflict, it is naturally mysterious and imaginative, for Carlyle had no “pet little hypothesis” of the universe. When it is used to denounce imposture and sordidness, it becomes fierce and impetuous. When it tells of the life of a dead friend, it is gentle and full of sad melody. A man is not always in one mood, he would be a strangely uninteresting creature if he were. If we are really anxious to understand and appreciate a human being, we are not satisfied with glancing at him for a single moment, it may be an unfavourable one. Those who know only the stormy figure of the *Latter Day Pamphlets* may well be surprised to see the gentle form bending over the lace-cushion of the poor worker at Ghent, or leading beggars across the London streets. But as we should pause before condemning an acquaintance on the score of a chance glimpse, so we should beware of accusing a writer of obscurity because we find difficulties in a single work which we happen to take up. I, for one, can quite certainly say that there is not a single sentence in all Carlyle’s published writings that is not as clear as the noon-day to me. But in order to understand Carlyle’s works you must know and appreciate the man himself.

It is quite certain that in the regular features of style upon which authors pride themselves, Carlyle

was in no sense deficient. The gift of throwing into a few very simple words a picture which haunts the memory for ever afterwards is the prerogative of only the very greatest writers, as the power of weaving a massive melody out of the simplest materials is the prerogative of the masters only of music. Yet this power Carlyle certainly had. Everyone remembers the words—"Coleridge sat on the brow of Highgate Hill, in those years, looking down on London and its smoke-tumult, like a sage escaped from the inanity of life's battle."<sup>216</sup> And there is another passage, equally striking in a similar way, which is only less widely remembered because *Friedrich* is less widely read than the *Life of Sterling*. "Illuminated Berlin shone like noon all that night (the beginning of a *Gaudeamus* which lasted miscellaneously for weeks)—but the King stole away to see a friend who was dying; that poor Duhan de Jaudun, his early schoolmaster, who had suffered much for him, and whom he always much loved."<sup>217</sup> This is not Carlyle's general way, of course; he oftener overpowers us by a torrent of magnetic words, such as those in the famous passages of *Sartor* and the *Pamphlets*. But it is clear that when he was sufficiently subdued in spirit to allow scope to his gentler nature, he could be as tender as Lamb himself, and as witty. Here is a joke turned out with a neatness which professional humorists have rarely surpassed. It is from the

<sup>216</sup> *Life of Sterling*, p. 48.

<sup>217</sup> *Friedrich*, vol. vi., p. 126.

account of his wanderings in Germany to gather materials for *Friedrich*. "Eckermann himself is at Berlin—one day may very well suffice in Berlin." Even Calverly might have envied this. Nor could anything be more mirth-provoking than Carlyle's way of telling a story. Listen to his description of what most men would have regarded as an ugly, but perfectly commonplace incident. He had been compelled to serve on a jury, not having the courage to "register himself as a Dissenting preacher." After two long days of weary attendance, everything had been done except the delivery of the verdict. Carlyle and ten others of the twelve were completely agreed. But one man made a point of standing out.

"Conceive our humour. Not a particle of dinner, nerves worn out, etc. The refractory man—a thickset, flat-headed *sack*—erected himself in his chair and said, 'I am one of the firmest-minded men in England. I know this room pretty well. I have starved out three juries here already.' Reasoning, demonstration, was of no avail at all. They began to suspect he had been bribed. He looked really at one time as if he would keep us till half-past nine in the morning, and then get us dismissed, the whole trial to begin *again*. One really could not help laughing, though one had a notion to kill the beast. 'Do not argue with him,' I said. 'Flatter him. Don't you see he has the obstinacy of a boar, and little more sense in that head of his than in a Swedish turnip?' It was a head all cheeks, jaw, and no brow, of shape somewhat like a great ball of putty dropped from a height. I set to work upon him; we all set to work, and in about an hour after our 'withdrawal,' the *Hash*, I pulling him by the arm, was got stirred from his chair—one of the gladdest moments I had seen for a month—and in a few instants more we were all rejoicing on our road home."<sup>218</sup>

Irresistible also is the sketch, though merely a

<sup>218</sup> Carlyle, *Second Forty*, vol. i., p. 206.



few scratches, of the interview which Carlyle had with Baron Rothschild, when the latter came to ask him to write a pamphlet in favour of the Jewish Disabilities Bill.

"I had to tell him it couldn't be; but I observed, too, that I could not conceive why he and his friends, who were supposed to be looking out for the coming of Shiloh, should be seeking seats in a Gentile legislature."

When asked what Baron Rothschild had replied, Carlyle went on—

"Why, he seemed to think that the coming of Shiloh was a dubious business, and that meanwhile, etc., etc."<sup>219</sup>

Evidently this humour must have been rather embarrassing at times.

Much has been said of the intolerance which Carlyle showed in his criticisms of men with whom he was brought into contact, and there is undoubtedly some foundation for the accusation. But it must be remembered that the indifference to blemish which proceeds from ignorance or cowardice is a different thing from the tolerance which is the outcome of a really noble and catholic spirit. Carlyle's insight was too keen to allow him to be blind to faults and weaknesses, and he was too conscientious to pretend an admiration for talents which did not exist. Moreover, he had not the comfortable optimism which calmly accepts all the evil and meanness of life as inevitable. And it must also be remembered that, with scarcely an exception, his verdicts have been confirmed by the court of

<sup>219</sup> Carlyle, *Second Forty*, p. 419.



posterity. That gift, which is the rarest of all critical gifts, the power of judging contemporaries as time will eventually judge them, Carlyle possessed to a remarkable degree. Hence his criticisms often sound almost like the words of one gifted with second sight. The only man who can really foretell the future is the man who can actually read the present, for the future is, with literal scientific truth, in the present, and the true magician must look for his inspiration not in the stars or in mystic runes, but in the world of men around him.

And Carlyle was never guilty of the sin of keeping one measure for his neighbour's faults and another for his own. His letters and diaries show that he judged himself unsparingly. But he knew that the work he did was thorough, and having once done his best he was not ashamed of it. From quite an early period we find him quoting his own writings, though he never attained to the sublimity of writing a poem or essay upon himself. That audacity was reserved for a child of the unconscious West. But he felt that what he had written was true, and would bear repetition. We laugh at Disraeli for quoting his own epigrams in his *Life of Lord George Bentinck* and his *Endymion*, but we laugh with Carlyle when he recalls the extravagances of Herr Sauerteig's *Pig-Philosophy*.

Nor, in fact, is it possible to read Carlyle's works without becoming perfectly convinced of the thoroughness of the labour which entitled him to be thus confident. Everywhere there are proofs that each date

and name, as it came to light, was followed up till its accuracy and meaning were fully tested. To Carlyle we owe the explosion of such historical fallacies as the scene between Maria Theresa and the Hungarian Diet, the conversation between the columns at Fontenoy, and the dramatic fiction of the sinking of the *Vengeur*. He discovered Chodowiecki long before the artistic world of England began to take any interest in him.<sup>220</sup> He traces the regiments which went with Braddock to America back to their appearance at Preston-pans.<sup>221</sup> Finding that there are two Fuchsbergs and four Neisse rivers in various parts of Germany, he will not rest till he has made his reader clearly understand the difference between each, though many another writer would have passed the matter by as unimportant.<sup>222</sup> He pounces on the misprint of a single letter in the Reich's proclamation of 1759, whereby an *eilende* ("speedy") army is made to appear an *elende* ("miserable") army.<sup>223</sup> He recognizes Tobias Smollett on the Carthagera expedition of 1741,<sup>224</sup> and even goes so far as to correct a Hungarian oath on his own responsibility.<sup>225</sup>

It is not easy to treat Mill in this erratic way. As the attractiveness of Carlyle arises largely from his irregularity, so the worth of Mill lies principally in his evenness. Through all his works there runs the same high moral tone, with the same low emotional note, rarely rising to anything above temperate. The

<sup>220</sup> *Friedrich*, vol. i., p. 317, and note.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. vi., p. 306.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. vii., p. 96.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. iv., p. 279.

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. iii., p. 171.

reader always knows where to find Mill ; there is no danger of his being startled by sudden discoveries. As a scientific teacher he is admirable, for the very reason that he never allows his feelings to influence his intellectual perceptions. But for the same reason he is deficient as a spiritual guide. In this capacity we need an evident enthusiasm, a *Schwärmerei*. Life is in Mill's writings a great *perhaps*, and one cannot help thinking that there must have been some defect in the personality of the man who could accept such a condition. It was possible for him to do this because he worked unremittingly in one province of life, rarely casting his eyes beyond it. He was like the dweller on the sea-shore, to whom his cottage and fields are the only realities, and who has no soul for the everlasting murmur of the ocean which breaks at his feet.

So we will leave Mill in his completeness, as we leave Carlyle in his ruggedness, and end our day's labour by recalling one other feature by which these two, so unlike in most things else, can be recognized as brothers.

Each had the instincts of a soldier. This is common enough with the heroes of the scientific school, the logic of their methods disposes them to debate and warfare. But it is not so sure a thing to find the soldier in the transcendentalist. Swedenborg and the German mystics stand aloof from the quarrels of the world, in calm disdain communing with the eternal oracles. Even in America, Emerson is only "mortified" by his countrymen's vice ; it is their virtue, their

sour and narrow virtue, that makes him ashamed. He will enter into none of their philanthropies, and war against none of their creeds. Thoreau withdraws to the solitude of Walden, to lead his perfect life out of hearing of the voices and footfalls of men. And to Walt Whitman everything is and remains alike good.

But with Carlyle transcendentalism descends into the market-place, and calls on all men to repent. It is not content with speaking in an unknown tongue, but must translate its meaning into the common speech, and deal with the common things of life. Emerson said of himself, "My whole philosophy teaches acquiescence and optimism."<sup>226</sup> Imagine this as Carlyle's motto. Mr. John Morley has complained of Emerson that "he does almost as little as Carlyle himself to fire men with faith in social progress as the crown of wise endeavour,"<sup>227</sup> and this is, of course, exactly the kind of remark that one expects from Mr. John Morley, who rarely misses an opportunity of mounting the stump. But we shall venture to think that in awakening the minds of men to the fact that there is a world above and beyond the world of dogmas and formulas, political or other, Carlyle arrested a degrading tendency in the lives of Englishmen towards a grovelling faith in the complete omnipotence of the almighty dollar, and a fetish-worship of the infallibility of the odd man. The very claim which the admirers of Carlyle make for him is, that he lived closer to the facts of life than

<sup>226</sup> *Correspondence of Carlyle and Emerson*, vol. i., p. 342.

<sup>227</sup> Introduction to *Emerson's Works*, 1884, vol. i., p. lix.

those who called him unpractical and vague, and he himself was firmly convinced that the current political doctrines of his day had as little foundation in fact as the most airy speculations of gymnosophism. Before his critics take upon them to treat his teaching as a thing remote from the region of practical life, it were well that they should grapple once for all with these distinct claims. It is not a little curious that those from whose lips such depreciatory remarks so glibly fall, are in most cases men who pride themselves on their liberality and freedom from prejudice. As a matter of fact they are the real obstructionists who refuse to accept teaching unless it comes in the form of the old jingles which they have learnt to talk almost in their sleep.

So, then, we leave these two, as soldiers whose battles are over. In different ranks they fought, but under the same banners—of Truth against Falsehood, of Light against Darkness. Far apart lie their bones, those by the sunny waters of the south, these under the cold snows of their northern birthplace. But *they*, where are *they*? Do they now look down upon the battle-field where they fought so well in the days that are past? And can they feel for us, who, with feeblér steps, are pressing on the ways which they have won?







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